South Haven Tribune

$3

August 10, 2025

SH utility rates face possible changes

By JULIE NEWELL
SH Tribune Editor

SOUTH HAVEN — A new electric utility ordinance was introduced to the South Haven City Council that could change the utility rates for residents.

"This would be an introduction of an ordinance to amend the city's electric utility policy," City Manager Kate Hosier said. "Currently we have our electric utility policy as an ordinance and that sets the rates within the ordinance."

Director of Public Works Dana Burd presented the ordinance during Monday's meeting and explained some of the changes made in the ordinance, including have the rates set by resolution instead of by ordinance.

"There's two things contained in the ordinance," Burd said. "One is saying we're amending the ordinance to approve future rates and fees by resolution instead of always doing it as an ordinance amendment. Then the other is just a statement that more ties our rules and regulations to the ordinance itself."

Burd said they have been working on a cost-of-service study to evaluate the rates, fees and charges based on what it costs to provide service to customers.

"We've been working with the city attorney's office and our consultant Utility Financial Solutions, that helps advise both our water sewer utility and electric utility on rates and policy matters that relate to our fees and charges to the customers," Burd said.

In the study, it showed that the base and commodity fees have not been updated in the past 10 years as well as there not being a rate for commercial electric vehicle charging stations.

"We're seeing a lot of fluctuation in the cost of buying power, it's an auction every year," Burd said. "It's a market driven entity and there's a lot of electrification and not that many power plants coming back online throughout the nation."

Council Member Mary Hosley expressed her concerns about the ordinance changes.

"I'm concerned about going to a simple resolution, because with the ordinance change, there's at least two hearings," Hosley said. "Especially in the summer when people are traveling, they have a second opportunity to make comment verses one hearing and the resolution is done."

Hosley said she is also concerned, because in three years the base fee would double from $6 to $12.

"We continually hear that the standard monthly fee is starting to chip away at people's income, especially limited income," Hosley said. "We see that with the sewer and water rates and those were just raised in July."

Burd said when they are looking to get in line with the industry standard for the base fee that is collected year-round.

After discussion, city council voted to introduce the ordinance and set a public hearing for Aug. 18 during the regular city council meeting.

Contact: jnewell@southhaventribune.com, 269-637-1104

Photos provided

The first girls' volleyball team at South Haven High School competed in their first matches in January of 1976.

South Haven celebrating 50 years of volleyball

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — South Haven High School is celebrating the 50th anniversary of girls' volleyball with several events to honor the hundreds of young women who have donned purple and gold volleyball gear over those years.

According to a news release, on Aug. 15 there will be an Alumni Match and cookout, with the match featuring many of the athletes from previous teams.

"50 years ago, in the echoing gymnasium of South Haven High School, a dream came to life that would shape generations of young athletes and inspire a legacy of excellence," the release stated. "This year marks the celebration of the golden anniversary of girls' volleyball at South Haven High School."

Also that evening, the newest members of the 2025-26 volleyball team will be introduced. All alumni are invited, whether to play or socialize with fellow Rams.

Food that night will be available from Sandy's Food Truck, a local food provider and Ram supporter.

The South Haven girl's volleyball team won the state championship in 1985.

A large banner will be revealed that evening listing the names of each of the 318 young women who earned volleyball varsity letters over the past half century.

"The first matches were humble affairs – modest crowds, fledgling skill sets – but a spark had been lit," the release stated. "The seeds of greatness were sown in those formative years; a culture was established that would endure for generations."

The first matches, held on Jan. 7, 1976 saw the Rams losing a close match to Dowagiac before collecting the first of hundreds of victories over the next fifty years. Defeating Bangor 15-6, 15-7 when it was still a side-out scoring system and matches were timed. In front of a crowd reported in the press numbering over 200 spectators.

"Since those humble days, girls' volleyball has grown into the most popular MHSAA girl's sport in Michigan, with more than 19,000 participants," the release stated. "Attendance has also zoomed from a few friends and parents."

Last year 92,000 fans jammed a football stadium to watch a collegiate match and over 114,000 fans attended the MHSAA volleyball finals in Battle Creek last November.

Each of the home matches this year will also feature introductions of those alumni in attendance.

Also included will be special recognition of the numerous championships earned by each team including the MHSAA Class B state Championship in 1985, (celebrating the 40th anniversary of that achievement this year) the other three appearances at the MHSAA Volleyball finals (1977, 1980 and 1991), other district championships, several Wolverine Conference and SAC championships.

"The character, camaraderie and community spirit these talented athletes have contributed to not only the sport of volleyball, but to the communities where they now live,"

Those wishing to play on Aug. 15 can contact Varsity Volleyball Coach Wendy Spencer at coachwendyspencer@gmail.com.

Voters pick general election finalists

Two candidates go for mayor, four for city council seats

BROWN

HOSLEY

By JULIE NEWELL
SH Tribune Editor

SOUTH HAVEN — South Haven voters chose the final candidates who will compete for South Haven mayor and two open city council seats in the general election in November.

During Tuesday's primary election, incumbent Annie Brown received the most votes for mayor at 477, followed by current City Council Member Mary Hosley with 355 votes.

Newcomer Joshua Lemmer was ousted from the mayoral race with 351 votes.

Brown said she is pleased with the election results.

"I think last night's results showed that people really want a city council that is civil, respectful and hardworking," Brown said.

Moving forward, Brown said she is going to listen and focus on what the voters want.

"I will just keep on knocking on doors, listening to what our voters want and creating opportunities for people to meet me in their neighborhoods," Brown said. "I always think that listening is more important than talking."

Vying for the Ward 1 city council seat in the general election will be

See PRIMARY, page A3

SH officers, medics honored for standoff

By JULIE NEWELL
SH Tribune Editor

SOUTH HAVEN — Four South Haven police officers and emergency responders were honored with letters of accommodation for their actions during a standoff last month.

Van Buren County Undersheriff Casey Davis presented the awards to Sgt. Patrick Carlotto, Officer Kevin Wildy and South Haven Area Emergency Services medics Rex Hanner and Shawn Smith during Monday's city council meeting.

"Being a part of this situation and being the team leader for the SWAT team, it was probably one of the worst calls that I've been a part of," Davis said. "The amount of heroism that these guys displayed was incredible."

The multi-jurisdictional Van Buren County SWAT attempted to execute a search warrant on July 4 for a wanted fugitive located at the 28000 block of County Road 388 near Gobles.

When the officers approached the residence, the person detonated a pipe bomb inside.

The officers attempted verbal negotiations, but were unsuccessful. Davis said the officers then executed a tactical plan, which resulted in the person detonating another pipe bomb and eventually surrendering after he was shot twice by the officers.

No officers were injured during the incident, Davis said.

"They were professional, they came up with a plan, they executed that plan and ultimately, I believe that not only saved a lot of officers' lives, but we were able to use less lethal in order to take him

See COUNCIL, page A3

The Tribune: Celebrating Our 126th Year

OBITUARIES

Victor Grathwohl

July 28, 1931 – July 26, 2025

Victor Robert Grathwohl, 93, of Salisbury, N.C., passed away on Saturday, July 26, 2025, at the North Carolina State Veterans Home surrounded by family.

He was born July 28, 1931, in Niles, Mich., to the late Marshall Grathwohl and the late Eva Rayfuse Grathwohl.

Victor, the youngest of six children, grew up in Niles, graduated from Loras Academy in Dubuque, Iowa and attended Michigan State University.

He was a veteran United States Navy pipe fitter serving in the Korean War on the USS Ajax and USS Dixie warships.

On June 18, 1960, in Niles, Victor married Bette L. Warnke, recently celebrating their 65th anniversary. They were members of Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Salisbury and former members of St. Basil Catholic Church in South Haven, Mich.

Victor was a mechanical engineer in the paper manufacturing industry. He worked for Simplicity Pattern Company in Niles and Massena, N.Y. and James River Company, Kalamazoo, Mich.

He was a master craftsman, a remarkable good tennis player and a legendary apple pie connoisseur.

Most notably, Victor was a wonderful and kind person. His impish grin and quick wit drew people in. His love for family never wavered.

Those left to cherish his memory are his wife Bette Grathwohl, son; David Grathwohl (Susan) of Salisbury, daughters; Kimberly Grathwohl of Fort Wayne, Ind. and Susan (Zach) Park of Tampa, Fla., granddaughters; Maggie Grathwohl of Wilmington, N.C., Abby (Chandler) Inions of Salisbury.

Victor was preceded in death by his sisters; Mary Ann (Richard) Drury, Betty (William) Vanderbeck, Margaret Bohner, and brothers; Joseph (Mary Lou) Grathwohl and Father John Grathwohl.

Services will be held on Oct. 1 at St. Basil Catholic Church, 513 Monroe Blvd. South Haven, Michigan, with Father Bob Flickinger officiating. Visitation begins at 10 a.m. with Mass to follow at 11 a.m.

The burial will be held at 1 p.m. on Oct. 2 at Calvary Cemetery in Niles.

Donations in lieu of flowers can be made to St. Basil Catholic Church www.saintbasilcatholicchurch.org/giving.

Online condolences may be left at www.summersettfuneralhome.com.

Summersett Funeral Home is serving the Grathwohl family.

Edna Fleming

Dec. 21,1944 – Aug. 4, 2025

Rev. Edna Mary (Abel) Fleming, age 80, died peacefully in her home surrounded by her family on Aug. 4, 2025.

Edna was born at home on Dec. 21, 1944 in Sand Lake, Mich. to Alice (Hall) and Carlington Abel.

She was a graduate of Cedar Springs High School, Michigan State University and the course of study for United Methodist Local Pastors.

From a young age, Edna felt called by God to serve the vulnerable and marginalized. Edna began her career in ministry in 1966 as a Methodist Missionary in Brazil. While abroad, she was accepted at Garrett and Union Theological Seminaries.

Visiting home briefly in Jan. of 1970, she met Rev. George Fleming. George and Edna were soul mates. They married in November of 1970 and had two children: Alice Mary (Michael) Fleming Townley and Christina Joy Fleming (Neil Harvey). Edna and George cherished their grandchildren, Jonathan and Grace Townley.

At every church where her husband George was appointed as a pastor, Edna was the un-official co-pastor. They served United Methodist Churches in Turk Lake, Greenville, Chapel Hill in Sodus, and Lawrence Avenue in Charlotte. While at Lawrence Avenue, she completed the course of study at Duke Divinity, became a local pastor and was officially appointed to serve with George.

Gracious hospitality, compassionate listening and steadfast leadership were core to Edna's essence. In the Greenville area, she initiated a Meals on Wheels program.

While in Sodus, she resettled families who were refugees from the Vietnam War, formed a county wide task force against child abuse and neglect and supported Benton Harbor Public Schools.

In Charlotte, she organized local CROP walks and chaired the Hunger Task Force for the West Michigan Conference of the United Methodist Church, which at that time led the denomination in per capita giving.

She enjoyed creating beauty, re-decorating parsonages and restoring the churches where they served. She cooked abundantly for her family, guests and church crowds.

In their retirement, she delighted in designing and hosting in the 'yellow house' on their blueberry farm in South Haven. She kept the books for their farm and chaired the Conference Nominating Committee.

She continued to be a church leader at Casco United Methodist Church, where she and George were members.

In recent years, Edna progressed with grace and kindness through vascular dementia and she died of heart failure. Her family is forever grateful to Brandy Brown, the nurse who cared for Edna and always saw her soul, despite her health challenges.

Edna is survived by her daughters, Alice Mary (Michael) Fleming Townley, Christina Fleming (Neil Harvey); her grandchildren, Jonathan and Grace Townley; sister, Martha (Raymond) Eppler; brother-in-law, John McLaughlin; George's siblings, Tom (Dorann) Fleming, Floyd Fleming, Dotti Shonkwiler, and Ann Vermillion; several nieces and nephews; and their children.

She was preceded in death by her husband George; her parents Carl and Alice Abel; siblings, Albert (Fran) Abel, Helen McLaughlin, Gertrude (Harry) Reynolds and Allyn Abel; and George's brother-in-laws, Richard Vermillion and Jim Shonkwiler.

Visitations will be from 6 to 7 p.m. on Aug. 15 and from 11 a.m. to noon on Aug. 16, with her memorial service following at noon, all at Casco United Methodist Church, 880 66th St. South Haven, Michigan, 49090.

Her daughters, Rev. Christina Fleming and Rev. Alice Fleming Townley will officiate.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that memorial donations be made in Edna's name to Casco United Methodist Church.

The service will be live streamed on Casco United Methodist Church's YouTube page.

To those who choose to leave a memory or condolence go to www.starksfamilyfh.com.

Arrangements are entrusted to Filbrandt Chapel-Starks Family Funeral Homes and Cremation Services. 269-637-0333.

Jack Corbett

Jack Wade Corbett, son of Paul and Elizabeth Corbett, went to Jesus on Aug. 1, 2025, surrounded by his family.

His 86 years on this Earth were spent in Michigan, Illinois, Florida, Oregon and Ohio.

He enjoyed speed, whether by car, boat, plane, or motorcycle. He was a passionate trap and sporting clay shooter having belonged to several hunt clubs, an excellent cook and an avid motorcyclist who traveled thousands of miles around this beautiful country with his wife, Marge.

He was father to Victoria (David) Chandler, Timothy (Donna) Corbett, Barbara (Michael) Dallas, and grandfather to Jacqueline, Joshua, Bethany, Rebecca, Brittany, Devon and Ryker.

A celebration of life will be held at a future date at Mooresville in South Haven, 19624 CR687.

Arrangements entrusted to the Sommerfeld Chapel, 15 North Barton St. New Buffalo, Michigan 49117.

The Spotlight

A Weekly Guide To Services & Business Around Town.

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phone 269.637.5062 fax 269.639.2242
Mon, Tue, Thurs, Fri 11 am to 5:30 pm; Sat 11 am to 3 pm; Wed, Sun Closed

Meet our Pet of the Week, Tatooine!

The force is strong with this one. Tatooine may have arrived at Al-Van as a devoted mother to three adorable kittens (now off on their own intergalactic adventures), but now it's her time to shine. This cuddly queen of the outer rim is a vocal, playful explorer who will happily lead a household rebellion against boredom. Whether she's zooming through the halls like a starfighter or curling up in your arms like a purring Ewok, Tatooine makes it her mission to bring joy to her humans. She's brave, affectionate, and always ready to chat about the mysteries of the galaxy (or maybe what's for dinner). If you're looking for a loyal co-pilot to join you on life's journey, Tatooine is ready to hyperspace into your heart. Adopt her, you must, at al-van.org/adopt

Bark-B-Que
Join us this Friday for Al-Van's annual Bark-B-Que at the Huron Street Pavilion starting at 4 p.m. For just $15, you'll get a fantastic meal including a pulled pork sandwich or vegetarian burger, vegetarian baked beans, chips, ice cream with blueberries, and a beverage. Kick back and enjoy the musical talents of LaSoulfulRock and support all the furry friends here at Al-Van.

Rescued Treasures Parking Lot Sale
Stop by August 8th to the 10th for the Rescued Treasures parking lot sale! All sales are by donation. Get some awesome deals on artwork, furniture, beach toys, outside furniture and so much more!

THIS WEEK'S WISH LIST
PURINA DRY DOG FOOD

You can view our full wishlist at al-van.org/wishlist. All donations can be dropped off at our adoption center or Rescued Treasures (07591 Blue Star Highway, South Haven, MI 49090) during open hours, or shipped directly from our Amazon or Chewy wish lists Thank you so much for your support, the doggos, kittens and humans here at Al-Van really appreciate you!

If interested in including your business here contact freid@thehp.com

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Former specialty court admin arrested for embezzlement

$100,000 embezzled from Van Buren County grants

By TRIBUNE STAFF

PAW PAW — Michigan State Police Fifth District Special Investigation Section recently announced the arrest of Rachel Lindley for embezzlement.

According to a news release, Lindley was arrested for felony embezzlement of $100,000 and felony embezzlement by a public official and arraigned in the 7th District Court on Aug. 5.

"Lindley previously worked for Van Buren County as the Specialty Court Administrator," the release stated. "Following her separation from the county, she relocated to Maryland where she currently resides and works."

Lindley was arrested following a Michigan State Police led investigation that uncovered evidence she embezzled over $100,000 from various grants.

Embezzlement over $100,000 is a felony, punishable by imprisonment up to 20 years and/or a fine of not more than $50,000.

Embezzlement by a public officer is a felony, punishable by imprisonment up to 10 years and/or a fine of not more than $5,000.

BARN BURNS IN CASCO TOWNSHIP

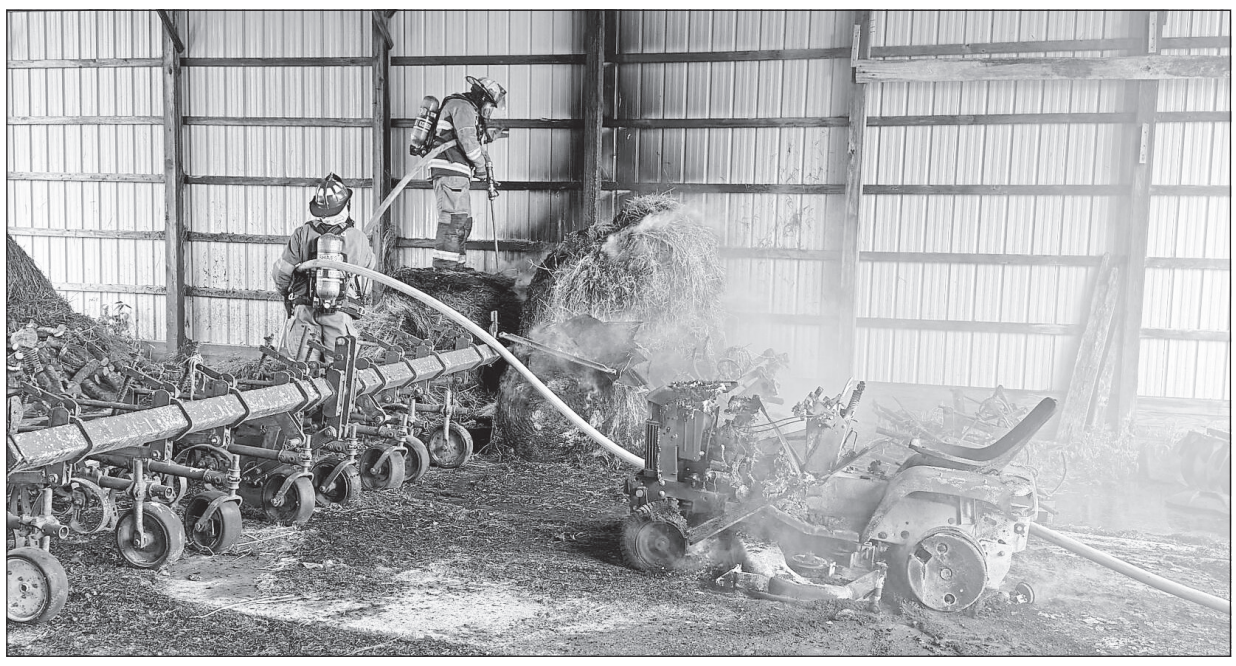

Photo provided / Tom Renner

South Haven Area Emergency Services extinguished a lawn tractor on fire that had spread to bales of hay inside a barn in Casco Township.

Photos provided

The South Haven Area Chamber of Commerce recently welcomed AXS Storage South Haven as a new member.

New smart-lock storage facility opens in SH

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — AXS Storage South Haven was recently welcomed as a new member of The South Haven Area Chamber of Commerce.

According to a news release, the chamber hosted a ribbon cutting ceremony at the brand-new storage facility, located on Lovejoy Avenue.

"AXS Storage South Haven offers state-of-the-art self-storage units designed with safety, convenience and modern technology in mind," the release stated.

Customers can access their units using smart locks, ensuring secure, keyless entry at any time. The facility is well-lit and monitored; providing a secure storage solution for residents and businesses alike.

"We're thrilled to bring AXS Storage to the South Haven community." Owner Tasha Farmer said in the release. "Our mission is to provide clean, secure and accessible storage solutions backed by state-of-the- art technology and friendly, responsive customer service."

To celebrate their opening, AXS Storage is offering the first full month free for new customers.

"We're proud to support the needs of residents, businesses and visitors in this vibrant lakeshore town," Farmer said.

For more information or to reserve a unit, go to www.axsstorage.com.

AXS Storage South Haven offers well-lit and monitored storage units with keyless smart locks.

PRIMARY

From page A1

Eddie Polk, who had the most votes at 277, followed by Lisa Krupiarz with 158 votes.

Polk said he was surprised, but pleased with the election results.

"The results of getting the vote and support that I got, obviously they have a lot of confidence in me and that makes me feel good," Polk said.

Polk said he is going to continue to look at the issues and make connections with the community.

"I'll continue to make connects with the residents and my ward, continue a dialog with them and just listening to what they had to say and what their concerns are," Polk said.

Krupiarz said she was disappointed with the results.

"I'm disappointed with what the message is that the city spoke," Krupiarz said. "I'm not disappointed with what I did, because I worked really hard and I knew I wanted to do that through the primary."

She said she wants what the South Haven voting residents want.

"I think people have loudly spoken that they want the mayor and her candidates," Krupiarz said.

Thomas Capps led the race for the Ward 2 city council seat with 174 votes, followed by Todd Heinrich with 137 votes.

Capps said he was happy to make it as one of the top two candidates.

"This is just halfway and we got November to shoot for now," Capps said.

He said he is still getting together a plan moving forward.

"Get the face out there, knock on doors and do a lot of meet and greets," Capps said. "Let people that may not know what our stances are on things like beaches and jobs."

Heinrich said he was happy with the outcome of the primary election.

"I'm glad that I made the cut and I'll be on the ballot in November," Heinrich said.

Moving forward, Heinrich said he has a lot of work to do.

"I'm 30 something votes behind my competitors, so I got to get out and do a lot of work and I'm ready to do that," Heinrich said.

Contact: jnewell@southhaventribune.com, 269-637-1104

COUNCIL

From page A1

into custody and he didn't lose his life," he said.

Other items

The city council approved the purchase of five motor pool assets for the cost of $489,425.70.

The assets include:

- Bobcat UW56 for street maintenance.
- Kawasaki FXR 1000 to replace a beach mule.
- Ford F-150 Crew Cab for the police department to replace an existing vehicle.
- Ford Interceptor Utility for the police department to replace an existing vehicle.
- DB41 Hydraulic Derrick to support electric utility workers to access narrow off road easements.

Contact: jnewell@southhaventribune.com, 269-637-1104

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Celebrating 75 years

Dear editor,

This Aug. 14–17, Van Buren Youth Camp is celebrating 75 years of creating lifelong memories, friendships and leaders – and we'd love for you to join us.

Since 1950, VBYC has been a place where kids from across Van Buren, Kalamazoo, and Allegan counties – and from 23 other states – come to experience classic summer camp magic.

Campers ages 6 to 18 grow with us, from Little Bears to Leadership Camp, many returning year after year, often across generations. Some become counselors or staff; others remain lifelong supporters and friends.

We're especially proud of our Youth Leadership Program – the longest-running of its kind in Michigan. But across the board, VBYC has always prioritized affordability, inclusion, personal growth and joy.

Thanks to the incredible generosity of our Camp Family – volunteers, donors, and alumni – we've kept camper fees low and we continue offering camperships for those who need financial help.

In a world that feels increasingly digital, disconnected, and overwhelming for young people, VBYC gives campers something rare: a full week without phones, screens, or social media. They hike, sing, play, talk face-to-face, and experience real community. And they choose it – two-thirds of this summer's campers are returning from previous years.

When major upgrades are needed, we turn to our community. In recent years we've raised funds for new cabins, facilities, and a much-needed commercial dishwasher. We just paid off the mortgage on our newest bathhouse, and now we're raising funds to pay for a beautiful new dock – essential to summer programming and long overdue.

As costs rise and infrastructure ages, we rely on our neighbors and supporters more than ever. VBYC is a nonprofit without a big parent organization – just a tight-knit, passionate Camp Family. And that's what's kept us going strong for 75 years.

Whether you're a former camper, a curious neighbor, or just someone who believes in kids, you're invited to join us Aug. 14–17 for our 75th Anniversary Weekend. Relive old traditions, reconnect with camp friends and maybe even live like a camper one more time.

Our Camp Fest fundraiser happens Aug. 16 – a family-friendly event with beer and wine tasting for adults and supervised activities for kids. Details and RSVP info are at vbyc.org.

Thank you to the thousands of people who have supported Van Buren Youth Camp since 1950. Here's to the next 75.

John Tapper
Paw Paw

Rock the Boat event to light up South Haven

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — Summer fun continues at the Michigan Maritime Museum with the return of the Rock the Boat "4 Ever Young" event on Aug. 22.

According to a news release, the event will take place from 7 to 10 p.m. and offer live music, food and drinks.

"Now in its fourth year and bigger than ever, this high-energy fundraiser takes full advantage of the Museum's recently expanded boardwalk and waterfront campus – offering more space to dance, mingle and soak up the electric atmosphere," the release stated.

The 1985 Band returns to the event to deliver another night of iconic '80s hits.

"Dig out your leg warmers, tease up your hair and get ready to sing and dance along to the ultimate throwback soundtrack – complete with a dazzling light show and immersive experience," the release stated.

On-site food will be provided by Wood, Stock & Grill food truck. A cash bar will be provided by Harbor Light Brewery and offer beer, wine, cider, seltzer and non-alcoholic beverages.

"After the tremendous success of the last three Rock the Boat fundraisers – each one selling out – we are beyond excited to bring this popular event back for a fourth consecutive year," Executive Director of the Michigan Maritime Museum Bailey Sisoy-Moore said in the release.

Event grounds tickets cost $20 per person and are free for kids 4 and under. Tickets are limited.

Guests are welcome to bring their own beach chairs.

To purchase tickets and learn more go to Michigan MaritimeMuseum.org/Rock-The-Boat.

This event is sponsored by Scott and Julia Robbins and Clark and Cathy Carmichael.

Maritime museum to host lunch and learn lecture

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — The Michigan Maritime Museum will host curator of the Chicago Maritime Museum Madeline Crispell for a special lecture featuring women of the Great Lakes.

According to a news release, Crispell will present "Sailors, Keepers, Racers and More: Women on the Great Lakes" from noon to 1 p.m. on Aug. 13.

"From cooks to captains, lighthouse keepers to racing team leaders, women have shaped the Great Lakes in countless ways – both on deck and behind the scenes," the release stated.

The lecture will explore the often overlooked, but vital roles women have played throughout the region's maritime history.

"We are proud to host Madeline and guests are sure to find these stories inspiring," Director of Education and Programs at the Michigan Maritime Museum Ashley Deming said in the release. "By highlighting contributions at every level, it becomes clear how essential women have been to the maritime history of the Great Lakes."

Crispell brings a deep background in public history to her role as curator at the Chicago Maritime Museum. Her work, which spans exhibitions, walking tours and public programs, has delved into topics ranging from American travel history to Chicago's alleyways.

This event is part of the museum's "Whispers Across the Water" year-long series that celebrates the diverse and often underrepresented voices that have contributed to the Great Lakes' maritime heritage.

"Through monthly programs running through November, the series highlights the stories of Indigenous peoples, African Americans, women and other minority communities who have shaped the region's maritime legacy," the release stated.

This lecture is sponsored through the Nielsen-Wells Grant Fund and by Mike and Susan Smith.

Attendance is included with regular museum admission.

For more information, go to michiganmaritimemuseum.org/events.

South Haven Tribune

CLASSIFIEDS

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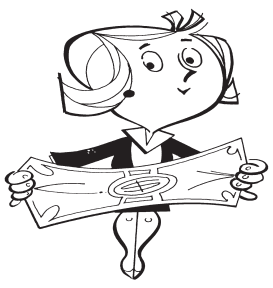


IN THE CLASSIFIEDS TODAY!

0900 LEGALS

CITY OF SOUTH HAVEN
PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

On Monday, August 25, 2025, the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) for the City of South Haven will hear public comments related to the request(s) below. The public hearing(s) will be held at 7:00 PM at City Hall, 539 Phoenix St, South Haven, concerning the following:

1. 713 North Shore Dr – Nonuse/Dimensional Variance

Segard Builders, LLC, on behalf of Michigander Home II, LLC, has applied for a nonuse/dimensional variance seeking relief from Zoning Ordinance Section 403.02 regarding the R-1B side yard and rear yard setback requirements in order to construct a new single-family home at 713 North Shore Dr. The parcel number for the referenced address is 80-53-840-010-51.

Supporting documentation is available for review at the Building Services office, 539 Phoenix Street, South Haven, MI 49090. Written comments may be submitted in lieu of or in addition to a personal appearance. Written comments must be received no later than 12 p.m. (noon) on Monday, August 25, 2025. Written comments should be addressed to the ZBA and must be submitted to the Zoning Administrator at kdissette@southhavenmi.gov or via postal mail addressed to the ZBA and sent to 539 Phoenix Street, South Haven, MI 49090.

Individuals requesting reasonable accommodation for impairments or disabilities should contact the City Clerk no later than five days prior to the public hearing in person at City Hall, at 269-637-0750, or at mkiker@southhavenmi.gov.

Kelly Getman-Dissette
Zoning Administrator
(269)637-0760
kdissette@southhavenmi.gov

RESERVE THIS SPACE TODAY!

0900 LEGALS

STATE OF MICHIGAN
PROBATE COURT
Van Buren COUNTY

NOTICE TO CREDITORS
Decedent's Estate

FILE NO.
2025 -1106 - DE

Estate of:
Craig Alan Huber
Date of birth: 09/24/1946

TO ALL CREDITORS: *

NOTICE TO CREDITORS: The decedent, Craig Alan Huber, died 07/30/2022. Creditors of the decedent are notified that all claims against the estate will be forever barred unless presented to Johnathan Huber, personal representative, or to both the probate court at 212 E. Paw Paw St., Suite 220 Paw Paw, MI 49079 and the personal representative within 4 months after the date of publication of this notice.

Bruce R. Redman P46958
Attorney name Bar no.
5161 Gateway Centre, Ste 100
Address
Flint, MI 48507
City, state, zip
248-508-43333
Telephone

Johnathan Huber
Personal representative
Bangor MI 49013
City, state, zip
269-910-0552
Telephone

Sell Your

In The Classifieds!

0900 LEGALS

STATE OF MICHIGAN
PROBATE COURT
COUNTY OF VAN BUREN

NOTICE TO CREDITORS
Decedent's Estate & Trust

Estate and Trust of
Glen Robert Dehn
Date of Birth: December 12, 1937

NOTICE TO ALL CREDITORS: The decedent, Glen Robert Dehn, who lived at 706 Kentucky Avenue, South Haven, MI died May 19, 2025.

Creditors of the decedent are notified that all claims against the Estate of Glen Robert Dehn and/or the Glen Robert Dehn Revocable Trust dated March 12, 2002 as amended, will be forever barred unless presented to:

Roger Dehn, Trustee of the Glen Robert Dehn Revocable Trust dated March 12, 2002, as amended and/or Roger Dehn, nominated Personal Representative of the Estate of Glen Robert Dehn, c/o Christopher J. LaLonde, Esq., Veritas Law Group at:

107 W. Michigan Avenue Ste. 500 Kalamazoo, MI 49007 and the Trustee within 4 months after the date of publication of this notice.

July 14, 2025
Date

Veritas Law Group
Christopher J. LaLonde P68317
Attorney name Bar no.

Personal Representative and Trustee's Name:
Roger Dehn, Trustee of the Glen Robert Dehn Revocable Trust dated March 12, 2002, as amended and/or Roger Dehn, nominated Personal Representative of the Estate of Glen Robert Dehn, c/o Christopher J. LaLonde, Esq., Veritas Law Group at:

Attorney's Address:
107 W. Michigan Ave, Ste 500
Kalamazoo, MI 49007
(269)270-3500

Trustee's Address:
107 W. Michigan Ave, Ste 500
Kalamazoo, MI 49007
(269)270-3500

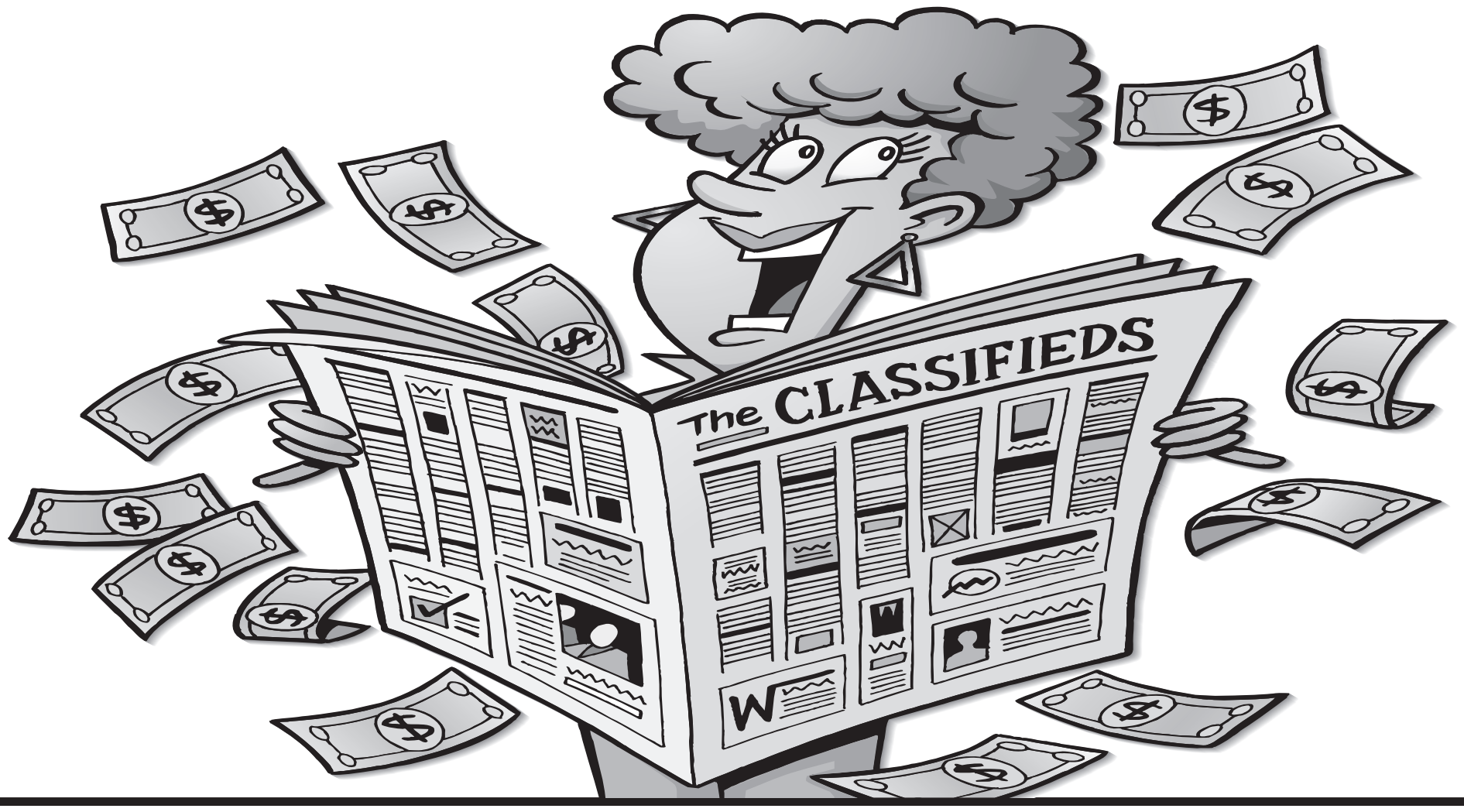
PUBLIC/LEGAL NOTICES

To place a public notice, please send your requests to **legals@pmginmi.com.**

Please allow 48 hours to process, larger legals may need at least four business days.

JOIN THE READERSHIP. SUBSCRIBE TODAY!

Classifieds Make A Cash Connection!



The Poulenc Trio to premiere in South Haven

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — The piano-wind chamber music ensemble The Poulenc Trio will appear in concert in South Haven on Aug. 15

According to a news release, the concert is presented by The South Haven Performance Series and will take place at 7 p.m. at the First United Methodist Church, 429 Michigan Ave.

"The Poulenc Trio is the most active touring piano-wind chamber music ensemble in the world," the release stated. "Having recently celebrated its 20th anniversary, the trio has performed in 46 U.S. states and at music festivals around the world, including the Ravello Festival in Italy, the San Miguel de Allende Festival in Mexico, and the Newport Music Festival."

The New York Times praised the trio for its "elegant rendition" of Piazzolla's Tangos and The Washington Post stated the trio "does its namesake proud" in "an intriguing and beautifully played program" with "convincing elegance, near effortless lightness and grace."

A performance in Florida was rebroadcast on American Public Media's nationally syndicated radio program, Performance Today. The trio has garnered positive attention in full-length profiles in Chamber Music Magazine and the Double Reed Journal.

"The Poulenc Trio has a strong commitment to commissioning, performing and recording new works from living composers," the release stated.

Since its founding, the trio has expanded the repertoire available for the oboe, bassoon and piano; with 22 new works written for and premiered by the group, including three triple concertos for the trio and full orchestra. They premiered two works with the renowned violinist Hilary Hahn.

"The Poulenc Trio launched a pioneering concert series called Music at the Museum, in which musical performances are paired with museum exhibitions, with special appearances from guest artists and curators," the release stated.

As part of the series, the trio has collaborated with the National Gallery in Washington DC, the Walters Art Museum, the Baltimore Museum of Art and the Hermitage State Museum in Russia.

The trio is engaged in musical and educational outreach programs, including "Pizza and Poulenc," an informal performance and residency series for younger audiences.

The trio regularly conducts masterclasses, including at the University of Ohio, San Francisco State University, Florida State University and the University of Colima in Mexico.

Founded in 2010, the South Haven Performance Series is an all-volunteer community-based organization committed to providing a rich mixture of musical arts for area residents and visitors.

Most concerts are held during the summer months with an additional holiday concert presented in December.

"Performances are provided thanks to the generous support of the South Haven Community Foundation, corporate sponsors and individual donors," the release stated.

Tickets are sold on the evening of the concert.

Summer concerts cost $15 and the holiday concert is free. Students are always admitted free.

Photo provided

The piano-wind chamber music ensemble The Poulenc Trio have performed in a variety of festivals and museums around the world.

SWMI housing market sales surpass 2024 mark

Report: Average home prices continue to rise

By TONY WITTKOWSKI
For the Tribune

Southwest Michigan's housing market sales in June slipped from the gain that was seen the month before in May.

Despite this drop, that month was still 5 percent higher than a year ago.

"Homebuyers found selling prices to be significantly higher than in June 2024," said Luke Jeffries, association executive of the Southwestern Michigan Association of Realtors. "The number of houses sold in June increased 5 percent to 252 from 239 in June 2024. Year-to-date, the number of houses sold increased 4 percent."

The inventory of houses for sale fell 8 percent from June of 2024. At the end of June, there was a 4.9-month supply of houses. This level dropped from the 5.7-month supply available in May. This inventory level is what is available for homebuyers searching listings for sale across Allegan, Berrien, Cass and Van Buren counties.

In June of 2025, the average selling price rose by 23 percent to $430,096 from $348,530 in June of 2024 and surpassed the average selling price of $385,028 in May. Year-to-date, the average selling price increased by 7 percent.

The median selling price in June of 2025 grew by 18 percent from $275,000 to $324,471 in June of 2024. Year-to-date, the median selling price rose 15 percent to $304,925 from $265,000 in June of 2024.

The Freddie Mac mortgage rate in June was 5.89, down from 6.89 in May, for a 30-year conventional mortgage. A year ago, the rate was 6.86.

The increase in selling prices in June elevated the total dollar volume 38 percent compared to the same period last year. The year-to-date total dollar volume leaped 22 percent.

The number of bank-owned or foreclosed homes as a percentage of all June transactions in Southwest Michigan increased by 3 percent compared to May.

Across the country

Existing-home sales decreased by 2.7 percent in June, according to the National Association of Realtors existing-home sales report.

The report provides the real estate ecosystem, including agents, homebuyers and sellers, with data on the level of home sales, price and inventory. Month-over-month sales declined in the Northeast, Midwest and South – but rose modestly in the West. Year-over-year, sales fell in the Northeast and West, while rising in the Midwest and South.

"The record high median home price highlights how American homeowners' wealth continues to grow – a benefit of homeownership. The average homeowner's wealth has expanded by $140,900 over the past five years," said NAR Chief Economist Lawrence Yun.

The median existing-home price for all housing types in June was $435,300, up 2 percent from one year ago – a record high for the month of June, and the 24th consecutive month of year-over-year price increases.

In the Midwest, existing-home sales decreased 4 percent in sales month-over month to an annual rate of 950,000 – up 2.2 percent for a year-over-year basis. The median price in the Midwest was $337,600, up 3.4 percent from June of 2024.

First-time homebuyers were responsible for 30 percent of sales in June, unchanged from May and up from 29 percent in June of 2024.

The total housing inventory for the Midwest registered at the end of June was 1.53 million units, down 0.6 percent from May and increased 15.9 percent from June of 2024. Unsold inventory sits at a 4.7-month supply, up from 4.6 months in May and four months in June of 2024.

Road commission to begin vegetation control

By TRIBUNE STAFF

LAWRENCE — The Van Buren County Road Commission recently announced they will begin invasive species and brush management services this month.

According to a news release, the herbicide vegetation control services will be conducted along various county road rights-of-way to manage brush and invasive species.

The Daltons, a licensed commercial applicator based in North Webster, Ind., has been contracted to perform custom herbicide applications to control brush along roadsides.

"Maintaining clear roadsides is essential for ensuring safe visibility for drivers," the release stated.

In partnership with the Van Buren County Conservation District, the road commission is also targeting invasive species such as phragmites and Japanese knotweed.

These treatments help prevent the spread of invasive plants, which can be exacerbated by routine road maintenance.

Spraying will occur in areas identified for invasive species treatment, as well as at intersections and other selected locations for brush control.

Excluded areas include:

- Platted or urban areas (i.e., NOT in subdivisions)
- Orchards and grape vineyards
- Certified organic farms registered on the Michigan Specialty Crop Site Registry (DriftWatch).

Applications are scheduled to begin Aug. 18 and will continue until the first hard frost of the season.

Property owners who wish to opt out of the brush spray program may do so by submitting an application and agreeing to maintain the roadside area themselves.

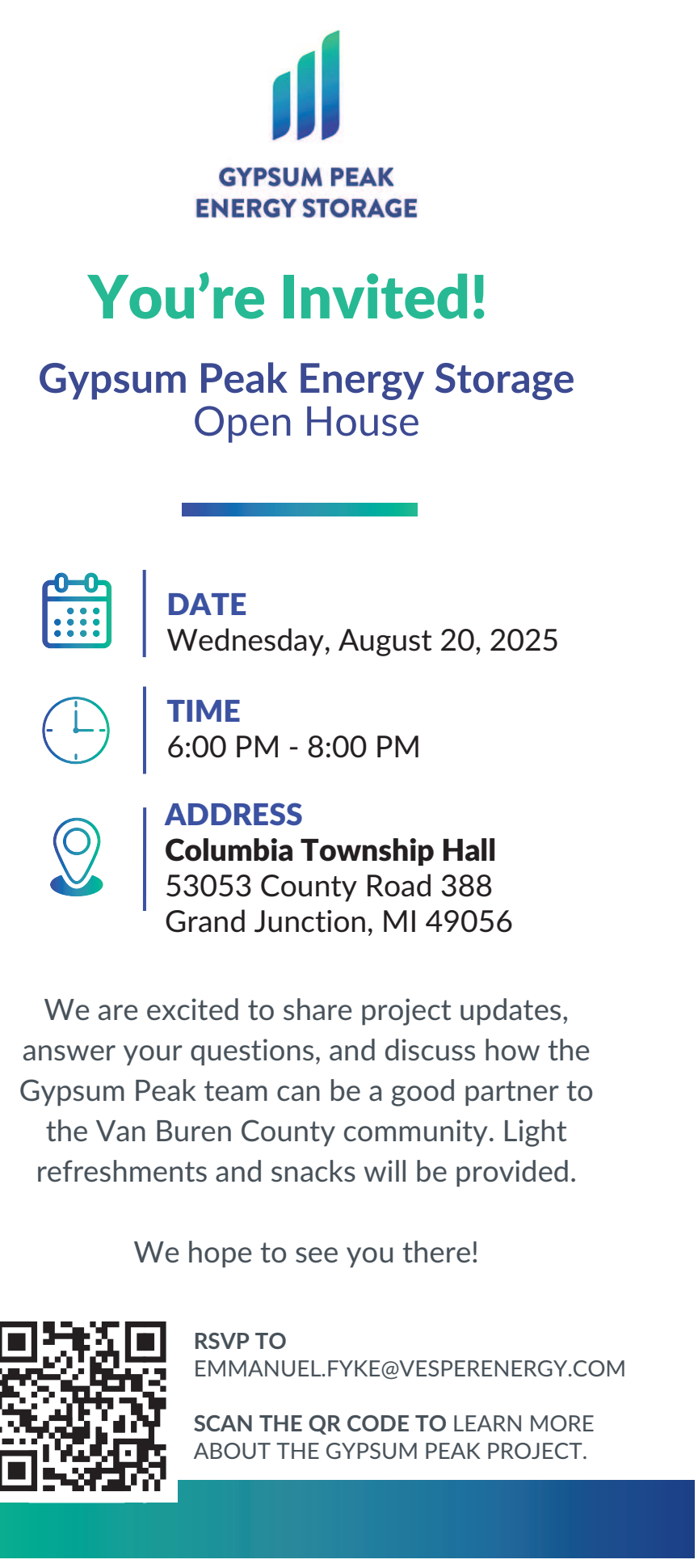
This includes cutting all weeds, brush and low-hanging limbs within 15 feet of the road surface and 15 feet above it.

To request an opt-out application form, go to www.vbcrc.org/vegetationmaintenance or call the Road Commission at 269-674-8011.

For more information about the herbicides being used, contact Brad Bolinger at The Daltons at 574-267-7511.

For details about the invasive species treatment program, contact Abbie Bristol, SWxSW Corner CISMA Strike Team Coordinator at 269-633-9058.

Fiesta at the Fair
AUGUST 10TH
Street Legal Pickup Truck and Tractor Pull
5 p.m. Grandstand
Tickets: $15
Presented by Dale Seyfred Pioneer Seed & Twin Maple Farm Market-Galien
2025 Berrien County Youth Fair
August 11-16
Grandstand Entertainment
Monday, August 11th
Sponsored by: Corewell Health
NTPA Regional Truck & Tractor Pull
featuring 4WD Trucks, Super Farm, Hot Farm & Limited Superstock Tractors
Show Time: 7 p.m.
Ticket Price: $17, $15, $10
Reserved or General Admission Seating
Presented by: Keystone Cooperative
Tuesday, August 12th
Sponsored by: Honor Credit Union
TUESDAY IS KIDS DAY
All children through high school get in the gates FREE!
CIRCUS CONTINENTAL
Show Times: 1 p.m., 4 p.m., and 7 p.m.
Free Admission!
Wednesday, August 13th
Sponsored by: VITERRA
COOPER ALAN
Show Time: 7 p.m.
Ticket Prices: $45, $35, $25
Reserved Seating
Presented by: United Federal Credit Union
Thursday, August 14th
Sponsored by: Indiana Michigan Power Cook Plant
From the Vault: The Riflemen singing a setlist of hits from various artists that have performed at the Berrien County Youth Fair over the years
The Riflemen
Show Time: 7 p.m.
Ticket Price: $5 Chair Seating
Free Grandstand Bleacher Seating!
Friday, August 15th
Sponsored by: Keystone Cooperative
DEMOLITION DERBY
Show Time: 8 p.m.
Tickets: $15, Reserved Seating
Produced by: TNT Demolition Derby Michigan
Presented by: Adams & Son, Inc.
Saturday, August 16th
Sponsored by: GreenStone Farm Credit Services
BULL MANIA
Show Time: 7 p.m.
Tickets: $15 Reserved Seating
Produced by: Super Kicker Rodeo Production
Presented by: Rural King
YOUTH FAIR GATE ADMISSION
Adults, Day Pass: $8
Children (5-12), Day Pass: $5
65 & Over, Day Pass: $5
Military Day Pass: $5
Adult Season Pass: $23
Child Season Pass: $12
65 & Over Season Pass: $14
Military Season Pass: $14
---Gates CLOSE at 10 p.m. daily---
RIDE WRISTBAND DAYS
Tuesday-Saturday
$32 during FAIR WEEK
Presented by: Honor Credit Union
Rides Area:
11 a.m. to Closing (Tuesday - Saturday)
Youth Exhibit Buildings: 10 a.m. to 10 p.m.
Fair Office: 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. (Mon.-Sat.)
Food Vendors: 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. (Mon.-Sat.)
A few are open for breakfast
Commercial Exhibits:
11 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.(Monday-Friday)
11 a.m. to 11 p.m.(Saturday)
Trophy Room:
8 a.m. to 10 p.m. (Monday-Saturday)
9 a.m. to 1 p.m. (Sunday, Aug. 17)
FREE PARKING ON FAIRGROUNDS
WWW.BCYF.ORG
FAIR OFFICE: 473-4251
HOT GLASS ACADEMY
Learn about the art of glass blowing and watch as glass blowing artists create one of a kind pieces. FREE shows daily between Noon and 8 p.m. at the South end of the Farm & Power area.
Sponsored by: Altogas Michigan's finest propane
Daily Mall Entertainment!
Al Barbott Memorial Stage
Courtesy Shuttles & Tram Service
Sponsor: Country Heritage Credit Union
Shuttle Hours: 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.
Call 269-473-1500 or go to www.bcyf.org for Grandstand Tickets and more info!


GYPSUM PEAK ENERGY STORAGE
You're Invited!
Gypsum Peak Energy Storage
Open House
DATE
Wednesday, August 20, 2025
TIME
6:00 PM - 8:00 PM
ADDRESS
Columbia Township Hall
53053 County Road 388
Grand Junction, MI 49056
We are excited to share project updates, answer your questions, and discuss how the Gypsum Peak team can be a good partner to the Van Buren County community. Light refreshments and snacks will be provided.
We hope to see you there!
RSVP TO
EMMANUEL.FYKE@VESPERENERGY.COM
SCAN THE QR CODE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE GYPSUM PEAK PROJECT.

SOUTH HAVEN COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Ongoing events

Visually impaired and blind persons support group meeting: Every third Wednesday of the month at 1 p.m. at Senior Services of Van Buren County.

Dementia and Alzheimer's caregivers support group meeting: Every third Wednesday of each month at 6 p.m. at Peace Evangelical Lutheran Church library.

Three Blondes Brewing: Trivia night on Thursdays at 7 p.m. and 8 p.m. and Sundays at 1 p.m. and 2 p.m.

Sparkle and Spice Boutique: Mom and Me play date. Fridays from 9-10 a.m.

South Haven Center for the Arts: Center Studio for adults from 6-8 p.m. on the first and third Wednesday of the month. Artists of any level can bring their own projects to work on. Basic art supplies will be available. Attendees must be 18 years old and over. Members are free, non-members cost $5.

South Haven Center for the Arts: Center Studio for ages 9 to 13 from 4-5:30 p.m. every Wednesday. Young artists are invited to create art at their own pace with an instructor to help guide as needed. Free workshop but a $10 donation is suggested to help cover cost of supplies.

South Haven Center for the Arts: "Altered Consumerism" exhibition from Aug. 8 through Sept. 20.

Candlelight Yoga: Thursdays at 7:30 p.m. at the Church of Epiphany. Cost is $15.

Food pantry: First Congregational Church open from 10 a.m. to noon on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. It is a drive-up food pantry.

Food pantry: Sacred Heart Catholic Church. For Bangor residents only. Open from 1-4 p.m. on Thursdays.

Food, clothing, baby pantry: Lily of the Valley Church in Covert. Open from noon to 2 p.m. on Wednesdays. Must call the central office to register.

Personal care and clothing pantry: First Assembly of God open from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Wednesdays. Must call the central office to register.

Baby pantry: Peace Lutheran Church open from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Friday. Must call the central office to register.

Baby pantry: Simpson United Methodist Church in Bangor. Open from 10 a.m. to noon on Tuesdays. Must call the central office to register.

South Haven Memorial Library: Story Time from 11 a.m. to noon on Tuesdays.

South Haven Farm Market: Saturdays from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. through October. Wednesdays from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. June through August at Huron Street Pavilion.

Daydreamer Domes: Local community pool day every Tuesday at 11 a.m.

HawksHead: Pasta on the Patio every Wednesday at 5 p.m.

Michigan Maritime Museum: Hands-on the Harbor every Thursday at 10:30 a.m.

Lake Arvesta: Summer at the pasture concert every Friday and Saturday at 6 p.m.

Liberty Hyde Bailey Museum: Storywalk "Fly, Butterfly" by Bonnie Bader from Aug. 1 through 31.

Liberty Hyde Bailey Museum: New Exhibit – "The Adventures of Liberty Hyde Bailey – Chicago: 1872." Available during museum hours: 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday.

Michigan Maritime Museum: Fish Tales Story Time at 11 a.m. on Mondays through August.

August

8-10 – National Blueberry Festival.

9-10 – Blueberry Festival craft fair: from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m on Saturday and from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Sunday.

10 – Rotary Club: Pancake breakfast and Fly-in at South Haven Airport.

11-15 – Fennville District Library: Art Camp, ages 6 to 18 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Registration is required.

12 – South Haven Memorial Library: South Haven Strummers ukulele event for all ages from 6 to 7:30 p.m.

13 – South Haven Memorial Library: Estate Planning event presented by Schuitmaker Moraitis Law Office of Paw Paw from noon to 2:45 p.m.

13 – Michigan Maritime Museum: "Sailors, Keepers, Racers and more: Women of the Great Lakes" lecture from noon to 1 p.m.

14 – South Haven Memorial Library: Cookie decorating from 3 to 5:30 p.m.

14 – Riverfront Concert Series: Shamara Tumblin to perform jazz gospel music at 7 p.m. at the Municipal Marina lawn.

14 – South Haven Area Young Professionals: Monthly networking event from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. at Captain Lou's.

15 – South Haven Performance Series: The Poulenc Trio, an oboe, bassoon and piano trio at 7 p.m. at First United Methodist Church.

16 – Salute to Veterans boat parade and fly-over: Starting at noon at South Beach.

16 – South Haven Theatre Series: "Winston Churchill: The Blitz" starring Randy Otto at 7:30 p.m. at Listiak Auditorium.

18 – Kiwanis: South Haven Area Emergency Services Chief Brandon Hinz to give an update on emergency services. Noon at the Senior Services Center. All are welcome.

19 – Scott Club: The life of World War I soldier David Lee Sutfin presented by Steve Rossio at 1 p.m.

19 – Liberty Hyde Bailey Museum: Presentation on monarchs from Janice Wick of the Paw Paw Monarch Waystation. Free event.

20 – South Haven Memorial Library: Hooked on Yarn from 1 to 3:30 p.m.

21 – Riverfront Concert Series: Casco Community Band at 7 p.m. at the Municipal Marina lawn.

22 – Michigan Maritime Museum: Rock the Boat from 7 to 10 p.m.

23 – American Legion Post #49: BBQ on the Bluff from 4 to 9 p.m.

23 – South Haven Memorial Library: Astronomy Club at 11 a.m.

23 – Liverpool Legends: "The Complete Beatles Experience" at 7:30 p.m. at Warner Vineyard in Paw Paw.

27 – First Congregational UCC: Open Mic Night at 6 p.m.

28 – Riverfront Concert Series: Zion Lion, Kalamazoo's premier reggae band at 7 p.m. at the Municipal Marina lawn.

30-31 – All Crafts Fair: from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m on Saturday and from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Sunday at Stanley Johnston Park.

South Haven Performance Series

INTERNATIONALLY ACCLAIMED!

The Poulenc Trio has garnered international recognition over its 20-year history. It is one of the most sought-after piano and woodwind ensembles in the country and they're performing in South Haven!

Friday, August 15
7:00 p.m.

First United Methodist Church
429 Michigan Ave., South Haven, MI 49090

Admission $15

The South Haven Performance Series thanks the South Haven Community Foundation and our many friends for supporting our 15th season.

www.southhavenperformanceseries.com Follow us on Facebook

South Haven Theatre Series PRESENTS

WINSTON CHURCHILL
THE BLITZ
AUGUST 16, 2025
7:30PM

Step onto a London Rooftop, where historian/actor Randy Otto as Churchill heroically leads his kinsmen to victory in the face of the terrifying German bombing of the city.

LISTIAK AUDITORIUM
600 ELKENBURG ST.
SOUTH HAVEN, MI
Purchase online or at the door
www.SouthHavenTheatreSeries.org

Tickets $15/Students Free

Supported with a grant from the South Haven Area Community Foundation

Light pollution is encroaching on observatories around the globe – making it harder for astronomers to study the cosmos

By RICHARD GREEN
University of Arizona (The Conversation)

THE CONVERSATION

Outdoor lighting for buildings, roads and advertising can help people see in the dark of night, but many astronomers are growing increasingly concerned that these lights could be blinding us to the rest of the universe.

An estimate from 2023 showed that the rate of human-produced light is increasing in the night sky by as much as 10 percent per year.

I'm an astronomer who has chaired a standing commission on astronomical site protection for the International Astronomical Union-sponsored working groups studying ground-based light pollution.

My work with these groups has centered around the idea that lights from human activities are now affecting astronomical observatories on what used to be distant mountaintops.

Hot science in the cold, dark night

While orbiting telescopes like the Hubble Space Telescope or the James Webb Space Telescope give researchers a unique view of the cosmos – particularly because they can see light blocked by the Earth's atmosphere – ground-based telescopes also continue to drive cutting-edge discovery.

Telescopes on the ground capture light with gigantic and precise focusing mirrors that can be 20 to 35 feet (6 to 10 meters) wide. Moving all astronomical observations to space to escape light pollution would not be possible, because space missions have a much greater cost and so many large ground-based telescopes are already in operation or under construction.

Around the world, there are 17 ground-based telescopes with primary mirrors as big or bigger than Webb's 20-foot (6-meter) mirror, and three more under construction with mirrors planned to span 80 to 130 feet (24 to 40 meters).

The newest telescope starting its scientific mission right now, the Vera Rubin Observatory in Chile, has a mirror with a 28-foot diameter and a 3-gigapixel camera. One of its missions is to map the distribution of dark matter in the universe.

To do that, it will collect a sample of 2.6 billion galaxies. The typical galaxy in that sample is 100 times fainter than the natural glow in the nighttime air in the Earth's atmosphere, so this Rubin Observatory program depends on near-total natural darkness.

Any light scattered at night – road lighting, building illumination, billboards – would add glare and noise to the scene, greatly reducing the number of galaxies Rubin can reliably measure in the same time, or greatly increasing the total exposure time required to get the same result.

The LED revolution

Astronomers care specifically about artificial light in the blue-green range of the electromagnetic spectrum, as that used to be the darkest part of the night sky. A decade ago, the most common outdoor lighting was from sodium vapor discharge lamps. They produced an orange-pink glow, which meant that they put out very little blue and green light.

Even observatories relatively close to growing urban areas had skies that were naturally dark in the blue and green part of the spectrum, enabling all kinds of new observations.

Then came the solid-state LED lighting revolution. Those lights put out a broad rainbow of color with very high efficiency – meaning they produce lots of light per watt of electricity. The earliest versions of LEDs put out a large fraction of their energy in the blue and green, but advancing technology now gets the same efficiency with "warmer" lights that have much less blue and green.

Nevertheless, the formerly pristine darkness of the night sky now has much more light, particularly in the blue and green, from LEDs in cities and towns, lighting roads, public spaces and advertising.

The broad output of color from LEDs affects the whole spectrum, from ultraviolet through deep red.

The U.S. Department of Energy commissioned a study in 2019 which predicted that the higher energy efficiency of LEDs would mean that the amount of power used for lights at night would go down, with the amount of light emitted staying roughly the same.

But satellites looking down at the Earth reveal that just isn't the case. The amount of light is going steadily up, meaning that cities and businesses were willing to keep their electricity bills about the same as energy efficiency improved, and just get more light.

Natural darkness in retreat

As human activity spreads out over time, many of the remote areas that host observatories are becoming less remote. Light domes from large urban areas slightly brighten the dark sky at mountaintop observatories up to 200 miles (320 kilometers) away. When these urban areas are adjacent to an observatory, the addition to the skyglow is much stronger, making detection of the faintest galaxies and stars that much harder.

When the Mt. Wilson Observatory was constructed in the Angeles National Forest near Pasadena, California, in the early 1900s, it was a very dark site, considerably far from the 500,000 people living in Greater Los Angeles. Today, 18.6 million people live in the LA area, and urban sprawl has brought civilization much closer to Mt. Wilson.

When Kitt Peak National Observatory was first under construction in the late 1950s, it was far from metro Tucson, Arizona, with its population of 230,000. Today, that area houses 1 million people, and Kitt Peak faces much more light pollution.

Even telescopes in darker, more secluded regions – like northern Chile or western Texas – experience light pollution from industrial activities like open-pit mining or oil and gas facilities.

The case of the European Southern Observatory

An interesting modern challenge is facing the European Southern Observatory, which operates four of the world's largest optical telescopes. Their site in northern Chile is very remote, and it is nominally covered by strict national regulations protecting the dark sky.

AES Chile, an energy provider with strong U.S. investor backing, announced a plan in December 2024 for the development of a large industrial plant and transport hub close to the observatory. The plant would produce liquid hydrogen and ammonia for green energy.

Even though formally compliant with the national lighting norm, the fully built operation could scatter enough artificial light into the night sky to turn the current observatory's pristine darkness into a state similar to some of the legacy observatories now near large urban areas.

This light pollution could mean the facility won't have the same ability to detect and measure the faintest galaxies and stars.

Light pollution doesn't only affect observatories. Today, around 80 percent of the world's population cannot see the Milky Way at night. Some Asian cities are so bright that the eyes of people walking outdoors cannot become visually dark-adapted.

In 2009, the International Astronomical Union declared that there is a universal right to starlight. The dark night sky belongs to all people – its awe-inspiring beauty is something that you don't have to be an astronomer to appreciate.

Richard Green is astronomer emeritus at the University of Arizona's Steward Observatory.

Photo from halbergman / Getty Images

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Steven_Kriemadis / Getty Images

The Detroit skyline during dawn as seen from across the Detroit River, in Windsor, Ontario, Canada.

Great Lakes offshore wind could power the region and beyond

By CORA SUTHERLAND
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Offshore wind power could provide far more electricitythan the U.S. uses for residential, commercial and industrial purposes. But the federal government has recently stopped approving offshore projects in the ocean.

Another option is available, though: the Great Lakes, where we are based as water policy researchers, and where state agencies rather than federal officials are the trustees of the lakes. A January 2025 executive order from President Donald Trump attempts to stop all federal permits for offshore and onshore wind power pending a review of federal wind leasing and permitting practices.

But the states, not the federal government, handle leases and permits for wind power on the Great Lakes, though federal agencies are involved in the overall process. It is unclear how this executive order might impede efforts to move forward with offshore wind in the lakes, but at the very least states could lay the groundwork now to be prepared to act when the next shift in federal priorities arrives.

A 2023 analysis from the National Renewable Energy Laboratory found that the Great Lakes states have enough offshore wind power potential to provide three times as much electricity as all eight Great Lakes states use currently, which would mean plenty left over to meet increasing demand or send power elsewhere in the country.

States are looking for opportunities

States have been forging their own paths separate from federal clean energy policy for decades. All eight Great Lakes states have state clean energy goals, and five of them – Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, New York and Wisconsin – have a goal to achieve 100 percent clean or renewable energy by 2040 or 2050.

The challenge is not just to transform the current energy supply. As transportation and other sectors electrify, that increases electricity demand. As artificial intelligence proliferates, tech companies need more and more electricity and water for their data centers. By 2028, data centers are projected to consume nearly 12 percent of the country's total usage, which requires massive increases in production in the Great Lakes and other key locations.

Companies and states are looking high and low to find enough electricity to meet the rising demand. They are extending the lives of coal-fired power plants and building new gas-fired power plants. Elon Musk's xAI company has even been powering an artificial intelligence data center in Tennessee with massive generators that add air pollution without permits.

Government and industry are also looking to other sources, such as investing in nuclear fusion advancement and building geothermal plants.

A brief history

In the 2000s and 2010s, the Great Lakes Commission Wind Collaborative, Wisconsin Public Service Commission and the Michigan Great Lakes Wind Council began to sketch out regulations for offshore wind in the Great Lakes and to identify locations that might be suitable for the turbines.

In 2012, the Obama administration agreed to collaborate with five Great Lakes states – Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, New York and Pennsylvania – to streamline a permitting process for offshore wind development. Multiple projects were proposed off the shores of Michigan, Ohio and Ontario, Canada, though Ontario banned offshore wind projects in 2011.

Since then, momentum has stalled. One effort, the Icebreaker project off Cleveland, was approved and survived various legal challenges, but the project backers paused it indefinitely in 2023 due to the economic impacts of the legal delays.

Community activists are split, with some embracing offshore wind in the Great Lakes as part of a clean energy future and others vocally opposing it, citing environmental, health and economic concerns.

As of mid-2025, the Great Lakes were home to no offshore wind turbines.

Big potential, big unknowns

States continue to explore the possibility of offshore wind power in the Great Lakes. In early 2025, Illinois legislators again introduced a bill to create a pilot wind project off Chicago in Lake Michigan.

Also in 2025, Pennsylvania legislators introduced a bill to facilitate offshore wind power in Lake Erie. If adopted, the law would map which areas are fit to be leased for development by avoiding nearshore areas, shipping lanes and migration pathways. The Ontario Clean Air Alliance is pushing the province to lift its moratorium and reconsider offshore wind in Canadian waters.

A lot of details remain unknown. New York state supports offshore wind in the ocean but says "Great Lakes Wind does not provide the same electric and reliability benefits" by comparison. Ocean wind tends to be closer to areas where electricity demand is high, which can make those projects more cost-effective.

New York also concluded in 2022 that despite the combined 144.5 terawatt-hours of annual technical potential in state waters in Lake Erie and Lake Ontario, "numerous practical considerations … would need to be addressed before such projects can be successfully commercialized."

To further explore the concerns New York's report and others have raised, in 2024, with National Science Foundation funding, we collaborated with a team of researchers looking at a wide range of issues, including engineering, environmental effects and law. That effort resulted in articulating research questions whose answers would clarify how realistic different aspects of offshore wind could be in the Great Lakes, such as:

- How does ice that forms in freshwater affect the structural integrity of turbines?
- Are floating turbines a better fit than traditional fixed-bottom turbines to reach the higher wind speeds in the deeper parts of the lakes and out of view from shore?
- If turbine components and installation vessels can't fit through the St. Lawrence Seaway, could they be built in the region and drive economic development?
- Can turbines be located in places that improve fisheries and avoid migratory paths of birds and bats?
- How can states establish leasing and permitting programs that maximize environmental, social and economic benefits?

State jurisdiction is an opportunity

In the oceans, U.S. states have jurisdiction from shore out three miles, with the federal government's jurisdiction continuing out for hundreds of miles beyond that. So offshore project sites in the oceans are leased by the federal government.

The Great Lakes are different. The state governments hold the lakes' waters and submerged lands in trust for the public. And state jurisdiction extends from shore all the way out to the boundary of a neighboring state's jurisdiction or the international boundary with Canada.

Regulation of planning, site selection, leasing and other elements of offshore wind projects in the Great Lakes are the responsibility of one or another U.S. state. The federal government's role is secondary, conducting environmental reviews and protecting navigation, but could still result in slowing state-led projects.

In research we published in 2024 and 2025, we explain that states could evaluate and select offshore wind projects based on a range of social and environmental benefits, in addition to financial considerations. For instance, they could look for designs that provide fish habitat or seek corporate partners that agree to train local workers, manufacture turbines and ships near the lakes, and provide cheaper electricity to local consumers.

Despite all the unknowns, we encourage greater support for research to harness the potential of offshore wind energy in the Great Lakes to be a renewable resource for states, the region and the nation as a whole.

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Susan Vineyard / TNS

A family walks with college students out the main gates of campus at the University of Indiana into the town during Fall Break weekend.

Baby boomers now live next to 18-year-olds at colleges across U.S.

By ELIZABETH REMBERT
Bloomberg News (TNS)

On a Monday afternoon last spring at Lasell University, students wrapped up their final beginner Spanish class of the semester. Pairing up, they drilled each other on their names, favorite foods and hobbies.

It was a routine conversation for Sara Leclair and Mandy Waddell, until Leclair, a 20-year-old sophomore, asked her partner, "Cuantos años tienes?" How old are you?

"Oh, this is getting personal," Waddell exclaimed in mock chagrin. "Ochenta y uno." Eighty-one. The two laughed, and the lesson went on.

The intergenerational classmates – Leclair, an early-childhood education major, and Waddell, a retired elementary school teacher – were brought together through the partnership between Lasell University and Lasell Village, a senior living community on the school's 54-acre campus outside of Boston. The unconventional arrangement, which offers retirees the chance to share space and studies with co-eds while providing a source of revenue for the university to help buttress its finances, has proved to be an enduring success, and increasingly, a blueprint.

There's arguably no better manifestation of the graying of America than senior citizens populating campuses originally designed for 18-year-olds. But as U.S. student enrollment dwindles, school expenses soar and the country's population rapidly ages, the improbable mashup is making more and more sense. Andrew Carle, a senior living consultant, estimates there are already about 85 of what he dubs university retirement communities in the country, a number he says is only set to grow in the years ahead.

"You couldn't find a bigger odd couple," Carle said. "But when you do it right, the synergy is there and it can be an extremely successful model for both parties."

Diverging Demographics

This is a niche – and often expensive – part of the senior living market, to be sure. It's not a cure-all for the harsh realities facing higher education, a list that includes declining enrollment, rising costs and this year's funding threats under the Trump administration. And not all schools are well-suited for inviting a retirement community onto campus. But the partnership does work in many cases, and it represents the kind of creative thinking that will be increasingly required in the face of convulsive demographic change.

Starting in the coming school year, researchers say there will be dramatically fewer high school graduates available to fill the country's higher-ed classrooms, stemming from a decline in birth rates that started around the 2008 financial crisis. Meanwhile, more than 10,000 people are turning 65 each day in the U.S. By 2050, the number of older adults is expected to reach 88 million people and make up more than 20 percent of the country's population, exceeding those under 18.

Higher education's shrinking student base has already forced at least 40 U.S. colleges to announce plans to shut down since 2020, and experts predict as many as 80 more schools may find themselves in the same situation in coming years, under a worst-case drop in enrollment.

On the other side of the divide, the rising tide of seniors is placing more urgency on the need for housing to accommodate the oncoming "silver tsunami," with current trendlines pointing to a supply-demand imbalance of worrisome proportions. The nonprofit National Investment Center for Seniors Housing & Care estimates that some 806,000 of new retirement units will be required in the U.S. by 2030. But in this year's first quarter, less than 20,000 units were under construction in the 31 markets NIC analyzes – the lowest level since 2013.

Forming a Framework

Against this backdrop, a growing cadre of school administrators and senior-living operators are joining forces to find solutions that address the needs of both constituents. In doing so, they are tapping into a movement that can trace its roots back to the 1980s and two pioneering midwestern institutions: Iowa State University and Indiana University. Both colleges were faced with the situation of retired administrators, professors and alumni who wanted to live out their golden years on their beloved campuses. In response, the schools started nearby developments to accommodate them, eventually partnering with senior living operators and helping to form a new framework.

Since then, different iterations have blossomed across the U.S., from communities such as Lasell Village, which are on campus and require residents to agree to log 450 hours of learning each year, to those with looser affiliations. Some, like University of Alabama's Capstone Village community, are also on campus and have official partnerships with the university, but don't require residents to partake in programming. Others are simply located near a campus and share a less-formal connection with a university, like Legacy Pointe just off the main University of Central Florida campus.

Schools often receive revenue through a land lease, royalty agreement or management contract. In rarer instances, they set up full or partial ownership of the retirement communities, sometimes through separate nonprofit organizations.

Lasell Village was the brainchild of former President Tom de Witt, who landed on senior living as a way to leverage Lasell University's valuable land and bring another source of income onto its struggling balance sheet. With insolvency closing in, de Witt proposed transforming an unused parcel of land near the edge of campus as a place for retirees. It opened in 2000.

"I had to take Lasell Junior College literally out of bankruptcy," he said in an interview, "or there would be nothing here now."

Some abandoned campuses have been transformed into senior-living communities. That was the case for Newbury College in Boston, which shuttered in 2019, bowing to "weighty financial challenges" driven by low enrollment and higher expenses. In the 20 years leading up to Newbury's closure, its headcount dropped from more than 5,300 students to about 600.

Kisco Senior Living opened The Newbury of Brookline, an upscale senior living center on the closed college's campus, in December 2024. The development company HYM Investment Group bulldozed Newbury's classrooms and dorms to build the new retirement community, but were able to keep Mitton House, an 1896 mansion that was one of the school's architectural crown jewels.

Doug Manz, HYM's chief investment officer, said closed college campuses can be attractive sites in crowded real estate markets like Boston or New York. Eastern Nazarene College's campus in Quincy, Massachusetts, which recently closed, has been floated for conversion. And the College of New Rochelle, less than 20 miles from midtown Manhattan, is potentially slated for senior housing.

"It's unfortunate, but small liberal arts colleges are disappearing," Manz said. "Meanwhile, there's high demand for senior housing. Both trends happening at the same time can create very unique opportunities."

Broadview, a senior living community on Purchase College's campus in Westchester County, a wealthy pocket within the greater New York area, saw rabid interest when it opened in December 2023, using about $400 million in municipal bonds to complete the development. Some 18 months later, the independent living space is full, with about 75 households on the waiting list, according to executive director Ashley Wade.

"There's been a lot of interest," she said. "It speaks to how many people want retirement on their terms. Our residents have been lifelong learners and they want that in their retirement, too."

Steve Shelov, a former pediatrician who retired a year-and-a-half ago, is emblematic of the kind of residents attracted to Broadview. The 80-year-old's packed schedule has included mentoring pre-med students, attending shows at Purchase College's performing arts center, meeting with school administrators and taking classes on art history and the Bible. "If you look at my week, it's so full," he said.

As with most retirement communities, Broadview requires an up-front entrance fee, which in its case ranges from about $270,00 to as much as $2.5 million. At the end of the contract – when a resident dies or moves out – the facility pays 80 percent of the entrance fees to them or their beneficiary. They also pay monthly fees ranging from almost $4,000 to nearly $13,000.

More Flexibility

In return for their place on Purchase College's campus, Broadview pays $2 million to the school each year. Mike Kopas, Purchase's vice president for administration, said 75 percent of that goes toward student scholarships and 25 percent is dedicated to supporting faculty. Kopas said the income is a relatively small part of Purchase's balance sheet, but allows the school more flexibility and ability to offer aid to students.

"The scholarship dollars have so far been above and beyond what we'd been able to offer before," Kopas said.

As higher education becomes an increasingly challenging business, experts like Carle say they're getting more calls from cash-strapped colleges looking at retirement communities. Unfortunately, the characteristics that make a college unlikely to thrive in today's environment – small, private schools in remote areas – also make it a poor fit for senior living.

"I have to tell them, 'Look, you're a small liberal arts college in South Dakota with 900 students, 500 miles from anything,'" Carle said. "There's just not a senior living market there."

There are other reasons that this collaboration can be tough to pull off: Senior housing companies – often under pressure to deliver shareholder returns – may find it challenging to wait out the bureaucratic processes of higher education. For example, Purchase College's leadership proposed bringing on a senior living facility in 2003. Doors opened two decades later in December 2023.

Unsupportive neighbors and local government can also delay projects, like in the case of Lasell Village, when a zoning fight ended up in court, holding up progress for years. Schools also run the risk of partnering with unreliable companies. Carle points to Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, Florida, which spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to prop up its senior living center through bankruptcy and construction delays.

Other times, tensions flare once facilities have opened and retirees have moved in. At Mirabella, a senior living community on Arizona State University's campus, residents and the complex sued a nearby entertainment venue for "incessant" and "unrelenting" noise. For some students, the complaints brought other grievances with the retirement community to the surface.

"ASU's decision to build Mirabella while ignoring the needs of its student population shows its prioritization of money over academic success," Haley Tenore wrote in a 2021 opinion column for the student newspaper. "As students on campus struggle financially and are made to live in subpar housing conditions, the University continues to expand outward, sometimes in areas where it is not wanted."

Eventually, Mirabella and the venue reached a resolution and asked the court to dismiss the lawsuit. Meanwhile, other students have praised the on-campus retirement community for fostering unexpected friendships and creating new programs.

'Bonus grandmother'

These arrangements have the best chance of success, experts say, when they emphasize a collaborative approach centered on intergenerational experiences and lifelong learning – not just seeing the partnership as a way to fill a budget gap.

At Lasell Village, students fill notoriously difficult-to-staff dining hall roles and say they feel like they've got 200 grandparents. The organizations have partnered to host a "senior prom" – senior in both senses of the word – for students and residents alike.

Friendships have bloomed from those interactions. Courtney Tello, an elementary education major who graduated from Lasell University in May, considers Lasell Village resident Toni Miller her "bonus grandmother."

"Meeting Toni has been a major part of my college experience," said Tello. "She keeps me motivated and checks up on me, I know of so many students who could benefit from a friendship like this."

As for former Lasell University President de Witt, now retired himself, he moved in as a resident in August 2021, about a half mile from where he lived as the school's president.

"Of course I moved in, why would I not do that?" he said. "I was president here for 19 years, this is my neighborhood."

FOCUS

When is it the right time to say goodbye to a beloved dog?

By JEANETTE MARANTOS
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

Mazie was my sweet girl, a jaunty caramel-colored spaniel with bulgy brown eyes that radiated love, even in her final days when she fell almost every time she tried to stand.

At least, that's the version I want to believe. But since Mazie died on April 29, I've talked to veterinarians who say our dog and cat companions don't show pain the way humans do. So was it really love in her eyes at the end, or was it desperation?

We never knew Mazie's origin story. My sister, a former animal control officer, spotted her running in heavy traffic in 2012 and managed to coax her into her car. We spent a couple months searching for her owner – she was such a beautiful dog we figured somebody must be missing her – but Mazie wasn't chipped and no one claimed her, so she joined our family, first in my sister's home and finally mine, where she became a doting companion to my late husband, who had Alzheimer's.

She was definitely a looker, prancing like a show dog after she was groomed, and was always cheerful and loving – except with lizards, whom she hunted and devoured with relish. In her glory years, she'd dart out of open doors or find the tiniest opening in a fence, and run down the street, looking back at her pursuers with laughing eyes. We couldn't stop her on foot, but she wasn't hard to catch. The chase ended with someone driving by her side. She'd jump in the car happily, give her captor a toothy grin and then curl into a contented nap, probably dreaming of her next escape.

We guessed her age at about 15 when her decline began. Over the next year and a half, she slowly deteriorated from a nimble, mischievous little mutt who adored our daily jaunts to a deaf and shrunken trooper who staggered with a drunken lilt but still insisted on "walkies" even though her pace was glacial and she couldn't manage more than a couple blocks.

I agonized about what to do but never made concrete plans. Instead, I fretted – how do you know when it's time to say goodbye?

I'd always told myself, "When she stops eating, that's when I'll know," but Mazie ate heartily up until her last few days. She slept more and more, but anytime I changed rooms she would slowly rouse herself and follow on unsteady, spindly legs. Our kind veterinarian shook her head at Mazie's tenacity and said, "She'll let you know when she's ready to go," but my sweet girl seemed stubbornly intent on staying alive and I had neither the heart nor the will to intervene.

Instead I did what apparently many people do. I froze in my grief and my guilt, and watched her waste away. I didn't want her to die in a sterile exam room. And when I called a mobile vet, just randomly chosen from online, I recoiled when they quoted a fee of $750. So I stalled.

I think I was hoping for some kind of Hollywood death, where she would give me one last affectionate lick, then close her eyes and quietly die. And that's kind of what happened until her final hours when her breathing became so labored she was writhing and wrenching herself upright trying to get air.

That memory haunts me. I sat beside her that whole day, the way I attended the deaths of five people I loved, but they had hospice drugs to ease their passing. Why couldn't I do better for my little dog?

There's no magic formula

"These are not easy decisions; who wants to play God?" said veterinarian Lorraine Watson of DR 4 PETS, a home euthanasia service for dogs and cats. "But you have to set some guidelines, and think about their quality of life. Our animals don't complain, they just live in the moment, and if you provide them with the basic necessities to keep going they can keep going for a long time, but are they happy? Because that's just as important as whether they're still eating."

There isn't really a magic formula for knowing when it's time, said veterinarian Robin Holmes, who worked in general practice for 20 years until 2013, when she founded Gifts of Peace, an in-home pet euthanasia service serving the San Gabriel Valley. Even with all her experience, Holmes said she struggled with the decision about when to euthanize her ailing elderly dog Gemios "a 20-pound fluff ball" who had been in her family for years.

"You would think with all my knowledge I would just look at things medically, but every time I'd think, 'Oh it's time,' he'd have a couple of good days." Ultimately, it was her ex-husband who helped her decide. He kept Gemios for a weekend when she had to travel and when she returned, he said, "'You do know it's time to make this decision?' And yes, I knew it in my heart, but it was still hard for me to make that decision. And three months later, I'm still grieving."

Oftentimes, Holmes said, veterinarians will just tell people, "'She'll let you know' and 'As long as she's still eating, she's fine,' but I'd like that last phrase to get lost because our patients will eat because their body says they need to eat; it's not an indication of good quality of life. I always tell people to just trust your instincts because you know them best."

All things considered, I was lucky that Mazie's death was relatively peaceful until the end, Watson said, but if she'd had cancer or muscular/skeletal problems like painful arthritis, her suffering could have been much worse," and that crosses the line. That's why you need to be in tune with your pet to see the signs of pain."

For example, Watson said, a big dog might pace or circle for a while to lie down because it hurts so much to get down. They might stumble or fall often or get trapped behind furniture because their legs aren't working well. They might be panting or breathing rapidly even at rest because they're hurting, and their facial expressions will change. "Their ears aren't up or their eyes aren't fully open or bright or you get a grimace expression on a cat, or they're withdrawing and hiding under the bed. Withdrawing is what wild animals do in nature. They get left behind by the pack or they'll hide under a bush because they know something's not right. And it's the same with our pets, they'll withdraw and oftentimes not interact as much with their people because they don't feel well."

Pain can also lead to appetite suppression, she said, so the animals start losing weight along with muscle mass, making them weaker and more skeletal.

In the wild, weak animals don't last long, Watson said. In our homes, we can nurse them along with medications and carry them outside to pee, but at a certain point we have to consider their quality of life.

She recommends using a calendar to note whether your pet had a good day or bad day and soon a picture will emerge. "Is your dog happy being alive?" she said. "Is it able to do at least some of the things that made it happy in the past? If they're just getting up to poop and eat during the day and then go back to bed, who wants to live like that?"

Plan before grief begins

Ultimately, it helps to reframe the way people think about pet euthanasia, said veterinarian Shea Cox co-founder of Honor Pet, a new "end-of-life-care" facility in downtown L.A. that provides comfort rooms where families can be with their pets during euthanasia in an unrushed, home-like setting.

"In cases of terminal illness or natural decline, death isn't something we're initiating – it's already in motion," Cox wrote in an email. "The decision isn't between life and death but between a longer or shorter journey to the inevitable."

There's a lot of gray area in making these decisions, but all three say it's vital for pet owners to start investigating their options well before they're in the throes of grief.

"Lots of times people say, 'This must be such a hard job for you,' but it's not really," Holmes said. "I find the person losing their pet is doing the hardest work, having to make very emotional decisions sometimes in the dark and sometimes without a lot of information. Really, nothing in life prepares us for making these decisions [about euthanasia] because inevitably when you start to consider it, and think maybe it's time, suddenly they perk up and then you feel guilty – 'How can I be thinking this?'"

So while there are no magic answers, preparation can help. Our pets' lifespans are so short, you don't need to wait until they're sick to start investigating your options, and what you're able to spend.

For instance, if I'd made more calls when I was less emotional, I would have discovered there are many in-home euthanasia services in the Greater Los Angeles area but most ask people to call for pricing. Only a few, like DR 4 PETS, list their prices online, starting as low as $450 for euthanasia for dogs 20 pounds and under, and as high as $850 for euthanasia and individual cremation for dogs between 51 and 78 pounds. Be sure to ask what the pricing includes because the fees often include the cost of cremation; so when I called in anguish and got my $750 quote over the phone, if I'd known to ask, I might have also discovered that the fee was less if I only wanted euthanasia.

I have a large yard, and Mazie was a relatively small dog, so after she died, I dug a deep hole, wrapped her in a cotton shawl and buried her, but that's not an easy option for people who don't have yards or have very large dogs. Most, Watson said, opt for some kind of cremation.

Most veterinary clinics and in-home euthanasia services offer a choice of communal cremation, where the animal's remains are scattered in the ocean or a private reserve, or the more expensive option of individual cremation, where their ashes are returned in a special container.

Cox's business, Honor Pet, provides water cremation, a.k.a aquamation, on-site so if people use their facility to euthanize their pet, they can have aquamation done in the same facility. The process uses hot water mixed with an alkaline lye solution, so it's more environmentally friendly than standard cremation, and usually more expensive.

The price of kindness

Honor Pet offers four large "comfort rooms" with rugs, couches and homey decor, where families can spend all the time they need to say goodbye. Price is the big advantage here, Cox said, since euthanasia at Honor Pet is $275, well below the cost of most in-home visits. It's also designed to be more comfortable and welcoming than typical veterinary clinic exam rooms, with extras such as making bouquets and creating cards for your pet.

But if cost is an issue, euthanasia will likely be the least expensive in veterinary clinics and Watson said some clinics offer special euthanasia spaces to give their patients and their people more time and privacy, so it's worth inquiring what kind of accommodations your vet may have.

Another consideration is the size of your pet, especially if they are suffering from mobility issues, a common problem for large dogs. Can you carry your dog from home to a clinic without adding to their pain? If home euthanasia is more than you can afford, ask your veterinarian about sedatives you can give your dog to ease their suffering when you transport them to the clinic.

But leaving home can be a real hardship for many ailing pets, no matter their size. Some dogs and cats panic in a clinic setting, or any new situation, so letting them die at home is a real kindness. This is where calling around ahead of time can help you know what to expect in terms of prices, procedures and availability when it comes time to make the call.

Note that many of these in-home vets work alone, so you may have to wait a day or two for an appointment. Most will sedate your pet before administering the euthanasia drug to minimize their discomfort, but it's a good idea to call and ask questions beforehand, or at least browse their websites which usually have extensive blog posts covering all kinds of issues, from preparing children for a pet's death to helping your other animals cope with the loss of a companion. Some, like Honor Pet, and the national chain Lap of Love, also offer grief counseling and support groups.

And you don't have to make these decisions alone. Mobile vets do offer home consults, usually for a fee, and your regular veterinarian can help you discover if there are treatments that can restore your pet's quality of life. Holmes warns that these home consults can sometimes be misleading – a dog who hasn't moved much may perk up momentarily with a new visitor who has interesting smells, she said, but that doesn't change the reality of his day-to-day life.

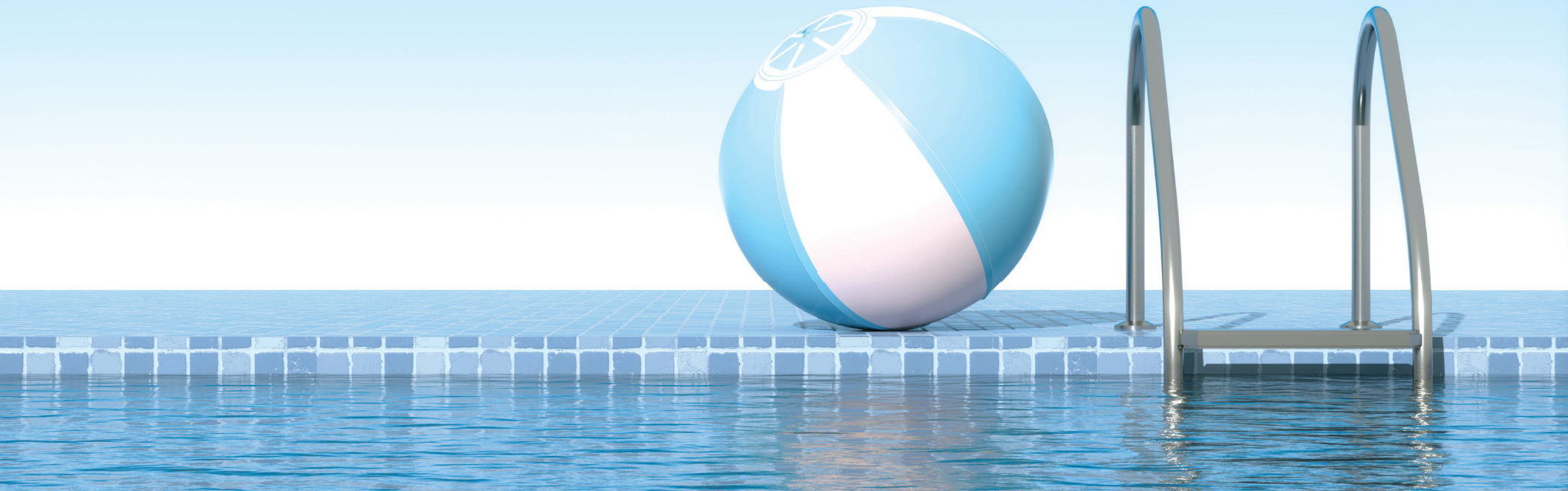
Still, there are treatments that can turn things around, Watson said. Small dogs, like her 17-year-old shih tzu, Miss Coco Chanel, tend to live longer than large breeds but they're also more susceptible to suffer dementia. Coco developed sundowner's syndrome, she said, panting and digging in the carpet "like clockwork when the sun went down. We could not comfort her," Watson said, and she was so arthritic that she could barely walk.

But Watson tried a prescription diet for brain health that lifted the sundowner's effect. "She's happy now and doesn't need her anti-anxiety meds. She loves to go on her little walks – yes, I'm one of the those crazy parents who have a stroller for their dog – and I let her walk as long as she wants to and when she gets tired I push her along until she gets a chance to sniff at all her favorite spots. And she looks forward to her food. We put it in different places around the house every day so she has to hunt for it, and she absolutely loves it," Watson said.

"We try to keep her mentally fit, and I'm lucky because she responded, but we have to keep reminding ourselves: When those things change, when she's not happy to see us every day or doesn't want to go for her little walk, then we'll know it's time to say goodbye."

Dreamstime / TNS

HEALTH



MAYO CLINIC Q&A

Water fitness – why aqua exercise works wonders

By MAYO CLINIC NEWS NETWORK (TNS)

DEAR MAYO CLINIC: We have a new fitness facility nearby. The pool schedule shows a number of aqua exercise classes. I'd like to try a water fitness class to add variety to my regular fitness routine, but can I really get a good workout in water?

ANSWER: Regular exercise provides a wide range of benefits, including weight management, improved cardiovascular health and sleep quality. But for many people, common forms of exercise, such as walking, running and weight training, are a struggle due to pain, weakness, mobility issues or fear of falling.

Aquatic exercise is an excellent way to focus on fitness in a gravity-reduced environment. Here's why:

■ **Buoyancy.** When standing waist-deep in water, buoyancy reduces your body weight by 50 percent, making this form of exercise very low impact. This significantly reduces the stress on your weight-bearing joints and bones.

■ **Support.** Water provides support for people with balance problems. The constant movement of water during a workout also challenges a person's balance. The more waves there are, the harder it is to balance and exercise.

■ **Resistance.** Water's viscosity slows movement and provides resistance, making aquatic exercise a great, resistance-training workout. With less joint stress, people find they can work out longer and do more repetitions.

All these benefits make water exercise an effective option for anyone recovering from a sports injury to regain range of motion, strength and endurance.

But these benefits also mean you can get a good, overall workout that improves strength, cardio and flexibility. As with any exercise, check with your healthcare team before starting a new routine.

Rido / Dreamstime / TNS

Regular exercise provides a wide range of benefits, including weight management, improved cardiovascular health and sleep quality.

Five things to know before jumping into the pool

1. Aquatic exercise is versatile. Aquatic exercise offers a variety of options and techniques for almost all levels of physical ability. These range from basic, such as walking in the water, to more high-level aerobic activities, such as deep-water running or swimming.

Standing exercises often are performed in water that's waist to chest deep, and they typically focus on improving range of motion/flexibility, balance and strength. Resistance training can be amplified by simply increasing the speed and range of movement or adding equipment that increases drag, such as webbed mitts, paddles, noodles or bands.

2. You don't need to know how to swim. Having a basic knowledge of swimming or water safety is a good idea for anyone who's around water, but aquatic exercise doesn't necessarily involve swimming. The shallow end of any pool or lake will do, since for many of the movements, you only need to be able to stand in the water.

3. Water temperature is important. Aquatic exercise in lower water temperatures (82-88ºF) is generally best for higher-level intensity exercise or people who are prone to overheating, such as those who are pregnant, obese or have multiple sclerosis. Aquatic exercise in warmer temperatures (84-92ºF) is better for people with arthritis, fibromyalgia or pain, as well as those who are frail.

4. Be aware of your abilities. With the increased ease of exercise in water, people often can tolerate longer exercise sessions. As a result, these sessions can be more intense, with larger ranges of motion, which creates the potential of overstressing your body. You may be more fatigued than expected following an aquatic exercise session.

5. Consider group exercises to mix it up. Group aquatic exercise classes are a great way to socialize, build connections, find support, increase accountability and stay motivated to continue exercising. Classes often are led by instructors who have special training in exercising in an aquatic environment. The instructors are able to offer suggestions for adjusting exercises for individual participants, if needed.

People often enjoy working out more in water than on land. When they're not in pain or afraid of falling and are having fun, it encourages them to exercise more consistently. You can even get in a good workout without getting your hair wet.

Kimberly Olsen is a physical therapist for Mayo Clinic Health System in Mankato, Minnesota.

Beyond the basics

Amping up your water workout on your own or in a class may include resistance equipment such as:

Foam dumbbells: Lightweight on land, they provide resistance underwater through flotation. They come in a variety of resistance options.

Water weights: Strap-on ankle or wrist weights increase resistance during arm and leg exercises.

Hand paddles and resistance gloves: They enhance strength training.

Buoyancy belt: Helps keep your head above water in the deep end while leaving your hands free. You can run, lift weights and do other workouts using your hands without having to tread water.

ASK THE PEDIATRICIAN

Pool dangers and drowning prevention when it's not swimming time

By ALISON SIEGEL TOTHY, MD, FAAP
American Academy of Pediatrics (TNS)

Swimming pools can have a powerful pull on little children – even when it's not swimming time. Those glistening turquoise-blue ripples may look especially inviting to an active toddler or an overly confident preschooler.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends several ways parents can help keep children safe around swimming pools and hot tubs all year long ☒ in your own backyard, your neighbor's or on vacation.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission studied drownings among children age 4 and under in Arizona, California and Florida, where pools are especially common. It found that nearly 70 percent of the children were not expected to be at or in the pool, yet they were found in the water. In fact, 46 percent of the children were last seen in the house.

Pool fences are important for ALL pools, including permanent in-ground pools, above-ground pools and hot tubs. Between 2013 and 2015, 58 percent of drownings among children age 4 and under took place in a pool or spa at their own home. Most children drowned when they wandered out of the house and fell into a swimming pool that was not fenced off from the house. They slipped out a door, climbed out a window, or even crawled through a doggy door to access the pool.

But a family swimming pool isn't the only one a child can get into unnoticed. More than a quarter (27 percent) of drownings among children age 4 and under took place at the home of a friend, relative or neighbor. Only some individual states and municipalities have laws requiring pool safety fences, and there is no national pool fence law. Whenever your child is in someone else's home, always check for ways your child could access pools and other potential hazards.

Fences are a very effective, proven way to prevent drowning of young children. Pool fences should be climb-proof, at least 4 feet high with no more than 4 inches of gap between boards, and completely surround the pool, separating it from the house and the rest of the yard. It is also important that the latch be placed high enough that a small child cannot reach it and that the pool remains locked when not in use.

Beyond a fence, additional layers of protection such as pool alarms, door and gate alarms, and pool covers can provide some added safety. Make sure alarms are in good shape with fresh batteries and keep in mind none are substitutes for a properly installed pool fence.

Even with safety measures in place, parents should be prepared in case their child gets into a swimming pool unseen.

To avoid this, assign a water watcher. His or her job is to watch all children swimming or playing in or NEAR water – such as on a backyard swing set – even if they know how to swim. This person should not be under the influence of drugs or alcohol, be off their phone, and remain vigilant even at a pool with lifeguards.

Other important safety precautions include access and wearing of life jackets and ensuring your child is properly prepared with swim lessons. Parents, caregivers and pool owners should know CPR and how to get emergency help. In addition, if a child is missing, look for him or her in the pool or spa first. This is especially important if your child is prone to wandering.

Alison Siegel Tothy, MD, FAAP is a board-certified pediatric emergency medicine physician at the University of Chicago.

Dreamstime / TNS

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends several ways parents can help keep children safe around swimming pools and hot tubs – all year long – in your own backyard, your neighbor's or on vacation.

Parents don't need to try harder to ease the stress

Forget self-reliance and look for ways to share the care

By ELIZABETH SHARDA
Hope College (The Conversation)

I wrap up my workday and head for home, making a quick stop to grab the supplies my sixth grader needs for a project due this week and some ingredients for a quick dinner.

Once home, I check the sixth grader's school website and discover a missing assignment. Bringing this up sparks a minor meltdown. I summon the emotional energy to help her calm down and problem-solve. My husband arrives home with our high schooler, who's discouraged by something that happened at soccer practice. We'll have to process that later.

Around the dinner table, we realize that both kids have sports practices Thursday, on opposite ends of town, at the same time as a mandatory parent meeting at school. And now I'm ready for my own meltdown.

On this particular evening, my family wasn't navigating anything unique or especially catastrophic. Scenes like this play out nightly in homes across the United States. In fact, my family's circumstances offer the protections of multiple forms of privilege. Certainly others have more difficult circumstances.

Why is it still so hard?

For a long time, I felt ashamed for being overwhelmed by parenthood. How do others seem to have it all together? Of course, the highlight reel of social media only fueled this comparison game. I often felt that I was falling short, missing some hack that others had found for not feeling constantly exhausted.

The reality is I'm far from alone in experiencing what social scientists term parenting stress. Defined as the negative psychological reaction to a mismatch between the demands of parenting and the resources available, parenting stress has become increasingly prevalent over the past five decades. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, nearly half of all parents in the U.S. said their stress was completely overwhelming on most days.

Stress like this has an impact: Parents who experience high levels of parenting stress have decreased mental health and feel less close with their children.

I began researching parental stress and well-being when, several years after becoming a parent, I left my job as a social worker and entered a Ph.D. program. Through this process, I learned something that changed my perspective entirely: Parents today experience such high levels of stress because people have never traditionally raised children in isolation. And yet, we are more isolated than ever.

It clicked: Parents don't need to do more or try harder. We need connection. We don't need more social media posts on the "top three ways to keep your family organized." We need a paradigm shift.

The myth of family self-reliance

Throughout human history, people primarily lived in multigenerational, multifamily arrangements. Out of necessity, our hunter-gatherer ancestors relied upon their clanmates to help meet the needs of their families, including child-rearing. Research over time and across cultures suggests that parents are psychologically primed to raise children in community – not in isolated nuclear family units.

Anthropologists use the term alloparents – derived from the Greek "allo," meaning "other" – to describe nonparent adults who provide care alongside that provided by parents.

Research suggests that alloparenting contributes to child well-being and even child survival in populations with high rates of child mortality. A 2021 study of a present-day foraging population in the Philippines found that alloparents provided an astounding three-quarters of the care for infants and an even greater proportion of the care for children ages 2 to 6.

In contrast, the ideal of the nuclear family is incredibly recent. It developed with industrialization, peaking in the 1950s and 1960s. Despite the significant changes in family structure – such as an increase in single-parent households – since that period, the paragon of the self-reliant nuclear family persists.

And yet, support from others is a key factor in family resilience. The familiar adage "It takes a village to raise a child" is, in fact, bolstered by social support research among parents in general, as well as those of children with special needs.

Parenting with collective care

Social support, while often viewed as a singular phenomenon, is actually a constellation of actions, each with its own unique function. Social scientists specify at least three types of support:

- **Tangible:** Material or financial resources or assistance
- **Emotional:** Expressions of care, empathy and love
- **Informational:** Provision of information, advice or guidance

Different parenting challenges call for different types of support. When my husband and I realized we had three commitments in a single evening, we didn't need advice on managing our family's calendar; we needed someone to take our kid to practice – that's tangible support. When my tween was blowing up over homework, I didn't need someone to bring us dinner; I needed to remember what I learned from a book on parenting adolescent girls – that's informational support.

To move away from the myth of family self-reliance and back toward an ideal of collective care would take a paradigm shift, requiring intervention at every level, from federal to state to family. A 2024 Surgeon General's Advisory on parenting stress called it an urgent public health issue and provided recommendations for government leaders, service systems and communities. Systemic strategies like providing access to high-quality mental health care, expanding programs like Head Start that support parents and caregivers, and investing in social infrastructure like public libraries and parks could all help reduce parenting stress in the U.S.

Personal steps toward a paradigm shift

Parenting stress is not a problem that can be solved solely by the individuals experiencing it. But here are five ways you can start making the shift toward collective care in your own life:

- **Take stock of your network.** Assess not only in terms of the number of supporters, but what types of support they offer. Do you have plenty of people to talk to, but no one who would bring you a meal or give your kid a ride? Identify gaps and consider ways to round out your "village."
- **Start small.** Introduce yourself to your retired neighbor. Sit next to another parent at your kid's sporting event. Talk to the babysitter you regularly see at the playground. Supportive relationships don't just happen; they are grown.
- **Offer help to others.** While it seems counterintuitive, people who give support to others experience greater well-being and even longevity compared with those who don't. Helping others also creates the opportunity for reciprocity. Those you support may be more likely to return the favor in the future.
- **Normalize asking for help and taking it when offered.** For many people, asking for support is hard. It requires dropping the facade and letting people in on your struggles. However, people are often more willing to help than you might assume. Further, allowing others to help you gives them permission to voice their own needs in the future.
- **Consider your caregiving expectations.** The way others care for your children may not mirror your way entirely. Consider what are nonnegotiable practices for your family – such as limits on screen time – and what is worth loosening up on – like veggies at every meal – if it means you have more alloparents helping you out.

None of these suggestions are easy. They take time, vulnerability and courage. In our society of rugged individualism and nuclear family self-reliance, parenting through a lens of collective care is downright countercultural. But perhaps it's closer to how we, as humans, have raised children throughout the millennia.

Elizabeth Sharda is an associate professor of social work at Hope College.

A doctor sees new hope for Alzheimer's disease patients and families

By PAMELA MCLOUGHLIN
Hartford Courant (TNS)

HARTFORD, Conn. — The combination of a recently approved blood test for detection of Alzheimer's disease combined with two medications that slow progression of the disease is drastically improving outcomes for patients and their families, according to a neurologist and surgeon at Yale New Haven Health.

Dr. Ausim Azizi is among those seeing the overall early results, as Yale New Haven Hospital is in the forefront of research and clinical care, he said, calling it "tops in the country," and home to a federally-funded Alzheimer's Disease Research Center.

"We have started 350 people on these drugs," he said. "Everybody I see feels better," and feel, along with their families that they have "more control" of their lives.

With easy early detection and treatment patients may never reach the end stage of the disease, he said. The medication slows the disease progression and maintains what patients have, longer, he said.

In terms of quality of life, someone 75 years old, retired with significant memory problems, can still have friends and, "a good life," with early detection and treatment, Azizi said.

Azizi said there is no cure for Alzheimer's, but the disease can be "modified" with medications from two different companies.

The medications approved about two years ago are Lecanemab, also known as Leqembi and Kisunla, also known as Donanemab. The drugs are administered through an IV infusion that targets amyloid plaque in the brain.

Azizi said confirmation of Alzheimer's, as opposed to other forms of dementia, is needed to treat with those medications and, until the blood test diagnosis, was complicated, stressful, and expensive, Azizi said.

The blood test, Lumipulse G, for Alzheimer's Disease, approved in late May, can confirm the disease with 98 percent accuracy, he said.

Prior to the blood test, doctors confirmed the disease by drawing spinal fluid to test for chemicals or through a pet scan, Azizi said.

The blood test is not predictive and the test is for people 55 and older suffering cognitive issues, he said. Confirmation of Alzheimer's is needed for the medication to be prescribed.

That early detection is key, he said, because while the medications don't cure Alzheimer's, they slow progression.

According to the Alzheimer's Association, it is a progressive disease, "where dementia symptoms gradually worsen over a number of years. In its early stages, memory loss is mild, but with late-stage Alzheimer's, individuals lose the ability to carry on a conversation and respond to their environment.

"On average, a person with Alzheimer's lives four to eight years after diagnosis but can live as long as 20 years, depending on other factors," according to the association.

The association notes that its "2025 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures" report found that "nearly 4 in 5 Americans would want to know if they had Alzheimer's disease before it impacted their lives," which means "91 percent of Americans say they would want to take a simple test – such as a blood biomarker test – if it were available," because that would then open access to early treatment.

Azizi said that, in Alzheimer's, sticky proteins or plaques are found on the brain that he likened to rust on an engine.

"The wheels don't turn, things are squeaky," he said.

People with the plaques have trouble with cognition, sequencing events and their memory noticeably going, he said.

The new medications "clear the rust," and slow progression, but the damage already done remains, he said.

Cognitive problems can develop with other forms of dementia, but the same medications don't work for those. He said 70 percent of the time when there are cognitive problems, it's Alzheimer's.

"Before we treat we ask, do you have biologic evidence?," Azizi said.

He said of early treatment, "It's huge for the family."

More information

When it comes to fighting dementia, simple lifestyle changes can improve outcomes, says neurologist Dr. Ausim Azizi.

10 things to boost the brain and help prevent dementia

- Control blood pressure, low number should be below 80
- Control blood sugar to around 100
- Control cholesterol, total fasting less than 200
- Adequate and restful sleep
- Diet, eat mostly unprocessed plants
- Maintain a healthy body weight
- If you are smoking, stop
- Reduce alcohol intake – maximum of 3 to 4 drinks per week
- Increase physical activity, including daily aerobic exercise
- Engage in enjoyable and healthy social and mental activities

FINANCE

Justin Sullivan / Getty Images / TNS

Back-to-school supplies are displayed at a Target store on Aug. 3, 2020, in San Rafael, California.

SURVEY

Inflation less impactful this year; still, nearly 1 in 3 back-to-school shoppers are making changes to save

By KATIE KELTON, CCC
Bankrate.com (TNS)

When it comes to back-to-school shopping, some of us might think fondly of new backpacks and the scent of fresh pencils. But Bankrate's 2025 Back-to-School Shopping Survey shows others might simply see dollar signs.

Stubborn inflation continues to change how nearly 1 in 3 back-to-school shoppers (30 percent) shop, but that percentage has trended down in recent years, perhaps indicating Americans have become more accustomed to paying higher prices.

Ronda Sunderhaus, Bankrate senior account manager in Charlotte, North Carolina, has lengthy back-to-school shopping lists for her three kids. In addition to school supplies, they buy several new outfits, backpacks and lunch boxes – "Those never seem to last when you pack lunch every day of the week," she says.

That's why her family looks for deals and compares prices together.

"I involve [my kids] in price comparison and decision-making when it comes to clothes, shoes and backpacks, too," she says.

One category they can skimp on is electronics. "Because my kids are younger, the only 'technology' needs they have are generally headphones," she explains. "I usually opt for a low-cost pair, since kids are prone to losing or breaking things, and replace annually."

Almost half of shoppers (49 percent) plan to employ money-saving strategies this fall, from finding cheaper brands to budgeting to buying less.

"The cumulative effects of higher prices and high interest rates are still weighing on many households," says Ted Rossman, Bankrate senior industry analyst. "Tariff concerns are also significantly impacting consumer sentiment."

Bankrate's key insights on back-to-school shopping

■ Today's prices have nearly 1 in 3 back-to-school shoppers rethinking how they shop. Thirty percent of shoppers say they're changing how they shop due to inflation. That's down from 41 percent in 2022 and 32 percent in 2024, perhaps indicating that Americans are adjusting to higher price tags.

■ Compared to 2022, a smaller percentage of back-to-school shoppers feel financially strained for the upcoming school year. Twenty percent of shoppers (down from 31 percent in 2022) say they'll feel a strain on their budget, and another 11 percent (down from 26 percent in 2022) feel pressured to spend more than they're comfortable with.

■ Half of back-to-school shoppers are using money-saving strategies this season. Forty-nine percent of shoppers have taken or plan to take action – buy cheaper brands, look for deals, budget or buy fewer supplies – for the upcoming school year.

Inflation continues to plague back-to-school shoppers, but less so than in years past

Nearly 1 in 3 back-to-school shoppers (30 percent) say inflation is changing how they shop. That's down from 32 percent in 2024 and 41 percent in 2022, during peak inflation.

Inflation is currently at 2.4 percent, well below the 9 percent peak in June 2022, but prices are still 23.7 percent higher than they were before the pandemic. However, our polling shows this is becoming less of an issue for shoppers. While the Bureau of Labor Statistics doesn't specifically track the price of school supplies, we can look at the prices of a few similar categories this year (as of May 2025) versus last year.

Stationery, stationery supplies and gift wrap are 4.7 percent more expensive than last year.

Boys' apparel is 2.1 percent more expensive, but girls' apparel is 1.3 percent cheaper.

Computers, peripherals and smart home assistance are 3.5 percent cheaper. But computer software and accessories are 6.1 percent more expensive.

Educational books and supplies are 9.4 percent more expensive.

One in 5 shoppers (20 percent) say these costs will or are straining their budgets, which is down from 31 percent in 2022. And around 1 in 10 shoppers (11 percent) feel pressured to spend more than they're comfortable with, which is down from 26 percent in 2022.

■ More millennials and Gen Zers are back-to-school shopping than older generations Overall, more than 1 in 3 U.S. adults (36 percent) are back-to-school shopping this year – for themselves or for a child. That includes nearly half of millennials (ages 29-44; 49 percent) and Gen Zers (ages 18-28; 44 percent). Only 1 in 3 Gen Xers (ages 45-60; 33 percent) and around 1 in 5 boomers (ages 61-79; 21 percent) are back-to-school shopping.

■ Most back-to-school shoppers won't take on debt this season Six percent of shoppers plan to take on debt for back-to-school shopping this year. "We do not worry about the start of school debt, but know many families do," Sunderhaus says.

Nearly half of Americans (46 percent) have credit card debt, according to Bankrate's 2025 Credit Card Debt Report. But nearly half of those debtors (45 percent) say it's because of emergency expenses, like car repairs or medical bills. Armed with a budget and money-saving strategies, it's possible to avoid debt this back-to-school season.

Nearly half of shoppers plan to use money-saving methods

Alene Laney, a personal finance writer in Provo, Utah, and mom of five, finds creative ways to save on back-to-school shopping. Their local public schools provide supplies, but her family is still on the hook for new school clothes, technology, backpacks and so on.

"I try to keep costs as low as possible, and the extra expenses come from a monthly budget category for essential home items," Laney says.

She's among nearly half of back-to-school shoppers (49 percent) who are employing one or more of these money-saving strategies in 2025.

1 in 5 will buy cheaper brands

Twenty percent of back-to-school shoppers say they bought or will buy cheaper brands than usual, down from 35 percent in 2022.

Try opting for generic versions of your kids' favorite brands or comparing prices between stores to trim down your budget. "I buy cheaper brands for the things that don't matter (paper, binders, scissors)," Sunderhaus says. "I also price compare between in-store deals (Target, Walmart) and Amazon online. I usually find that highlighters, expo markers, and ironically, glue sticks in bulk and then divided among my kids, are cheaper via Amazon."

1 in 5 will look for deals

Twenty percent also have or plan to find more deals and coupons than in the past. But that's down from 47 percent in 2022.

With five kids, it's important for Laney and her kids to buy things that will last without breaking the bank. "I don't go for the cheapest brands – I try to get the highest quality for the lowest price," she explains. "For that, I'm a big Costco fan. I also shop all the discount stores like TJ Maxx, Ross, Marshall's and Burlington Coat Factory."

Nearly 1 in 5 will budget for back-to-school

Eighteen percent already did or plan to set money aside and/or budget for back-to-school shopping, which is down from 33 percent in 2022.

Budgeting prevents impulse buying, which is a weakness for many Americans. And it helps you identify other categories where you might be able to spend less this season, so there's enough money to go around. You could also start saving up for back-to-school shopping a couple of months in advance.

About 1 in 6 will buy fewer school supplies

Sixteen percent are buying fewer school supplies than in previous years due to the cost, compared to 36 percent in 2022.

"Consider asking your child's teacher what's essential on day one versus what can wait until later in the year," Rossman says. Your kids may not need everything on the list right away. They might also be able to use last year's backpack, folders, pens and pencils and more.

5 ways to save money this back-to-school season

Once summer camps are over and schools start sending emails again, here are a few lessons to help you shop affordably for back-to-school.

■ Set a budget. With a monthly budget that fluctuates by season, you can plan ahead for back-to-school spending by pulling money from other everyday categories. For example, if you budget $500 for school supplies, you might be able to cut $200 from your family's dining out budget, $200 from entertainment and another $100 by skipping pricey snacks and only buying in bulk that month.

■ Make a shopping list. With a list in hand – that you actually stick to – you won't get sucked into buying more than you need or what your kids throw in the cart. Base the list on your budget and recommendations from the school, but also look for ways to reuse supplies from last year.

■ Stack discounts. Try "combining a rewards credit card with store promotions, online shopping portals and/or card-linked offers," Rossman advises. Those small savings can add up for a big shopping list.

■ Include your kids in the process. Back-to-school shopping is a way to teach your kids about budgeting while minimizing bickering over what to buy. "I make my elementary kids responsible for holding onto their list in the store and marking off what we have as we go," Sunderhaus says. "We also talk about the brands and prices of the items they are picking out." When her 6-year-old wanted a video game-themed pencil box, he chose to compromise for a more affordable lunch box.

■ Shop secondhand. Thrifting clothes and supplies, when possible, can help you get lower prices while helping the environment. Laney and her kids often shop secondhand and re-wear items. "I'm always surprised at the high quality of clothes I can get secondhand," she says. "We're happy to wear hand-me-downs or yard sale treasures."

■ Methodology Bankrate commissioned YouGov Plc to conduct the survey. All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 2,616 adults, of which 914 have or will do back-to-school shopping this year. Fieldwork was undertaken between June 2-4, 2025. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all US adults (aged 18+).

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SURVEY

Nearly 1 in 2 workers plan to search for a new job in the coming year

By LANE GILLESPIE
Bankrate.com (TNS)

After several years of favorable conditions for workers, with many job-hopping for better pay and benefits, the economy is once again an employer's market. Despite that, nearly half (48 percent) of those working full-time or looking for full-time employment say they're likely to search for a new job in the next 12 months, according to Bankrate's new Worker Intentions Survey.

Workers today are facing a complex job market. On one hand, total nonfarm payroll employment (which includes most part-time and full-time workers) rose by 147,000 jobs in June, roughly similar to the average monthly job gain over the past year and mostly in state government or health care, and the unemployment rate has been stagnant at 4.1 percent, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. On the other hand, the number of long-term unemployed people (those unemployed for 27 weeks or more) increased by 190,000. Most other major industries, from construction to professional and business services, had limited new openings in June. This has been especially stressful for new graduates, who are currently experiencing a higher unemployment rate than the general population.

The combination of low unemployment and limited openings for most industries has led to a trend called the " Great Stay," where workers are mostly staying put at their current roles.

Bankrate's insights on job hunters

■ White-collar jobs are limited, but many workers are looking for greener pastures 48 percent of workers (those working full-time or looking for full-time employment) say they're likely to search for a new job in the next 12 months. That includes 25 percent who say they're very likely to search for a new job.

■ Most workers' employment situation hasn't changed much 65 percent of workers say their employment or career situation is about the same as it was in January 2025. 22 percent say it's improved, and 14 percent say it's worsened.

■ Despite that, some workers are worried about their job security 27 percent of workers say their level of worry about their job security has worsened since January 2025. On the other hand, 42 percent say their level of worry about job security hasn't changed, and 15 percent say they're less worried.

Workers commonly want to look for a new job, ask for a raise

Sometimes, a more challenging job market can make people more cautious about asking for raises or additional flexibility at work, in an effort not to rock the boat. However, that isn't currently stopping many workers from looking for more from their current roles. More than 2 in 5 (44 percent) workers say they're likely to ask for a raise at work in the next year.

"As the job market has normalized following the period a few years ago when it was widely described as red-hot, many workers are seeking better pay or new work," Bankrate Senior Economic Analyst Mark Hamrick says.

Additionally, 36 percent say they're likely to ask for more workplace flexibility (such as different hours or the ability to work from home/remotely more often). As employers bring workers back to the office post-COVID-19, that percentage is down from last year, when 42 percent of people planned to ask for more workplace flexibility. Separately,18 percent say they're likely to relocate for a job in the next year.

As workers report having difficulty finding new roles, some actually plan to leave their job. While nearly half of workers say they plan to look for a new job, only 18 percent of workers say they're likely to quit a job in the next year, down from 25 percent in 2024.

Other workers are looking to leave the rat race altogether. AI is making it easier than ever to start your own business, and white-collar jobs are becoming harder to get. Now, one-quarter (25 percent) of workers say they plan to start their own business in the next year:

Gen Z workers (ages 18-28) are the most likely generation to look for a new role in the next year. More than half (53 percent) of Gen Z workers are likely to search for a new job, compared to 49 percent of millennial workers (ages 29-44), 48 percent of Gen X workers (ages 45-60) and 1 in 4 baby boomer workers (ages 61-79).

Additionally, nearly one-quarter of Gen Z workers say they're likely to quit a job in the next year, more than any other generation:

■ Gen Z workers: 23 percent
■ Millennial workers: 17 percent
■ Gen X workers: 16 percent
■ Baby boomer workers: 1 in 10

Gen Z and millennial workers are also likeliest to say they are likely to start their own business in the next year:

■ Gen Z workers: 31 percent
■ Millennial workers: 30 percent
■ Gen X workers: 19 percent
■ Baby boomer workers: 1 in 10

Also, a majority of Gen Z and millennial workers say they're likely to ask for a raise at work in the next year:

■ Gen Z workers: 51 percent
■ Millennial workers: 50 percent
■ Gen X workers: 39 percent
■ Baby boomer workers: 1 in 5

Notably, among different income brackets, workers making under $50,000 per year are likelier than people in higher income brackets to search for a new job in the next year:

■ Workers making under $50,000 per year: 58 percent
■ Workers making between $50,000-$79,999 per year: 47 percent
■ Workers making between $80,000-$99,999 per year: 29 percent
■ Workers making $100,000 per year or more: 41 percent

A small percentage of workers say their job situation has worsened this year

Regardless of whether they're ready to jump ship, the majority (65 percent) of workers say their employment or career situation is about the same as it was in the beginning of 2025. Though 2025 is proving challenging for many workers, this trend has persisted for a while. In 2024, 57 percent of workers said their employment/career situation was about the same compared to when the Federal Reserve started raising interest rates in March 2022.

One in five (22 percent) say their employment or career situation has improved in 2025, and 14 percent say it's worsened:

Among workers of different political affiliations, Republicans are the likeliest (27 percent) to say their employment/career situation has improved, compared to 22 percent of Democrats and 19 percent of Independents. Meanwhile, 16 percent of Independents, 13 percent of Democrats and 9 percent of Republicans say their employment/career situation has worsened.

Millennials are the most likely to feel increasingly worried about their job security

Despite recent news of layoffs and a difficult job market for white-collar workers, the majority of workers aren't more worried about their job security now. About 1 in 4 (27 percent) workers are more worried about their job security since the beginning of the year. Another 42 percent of workers say their level of worry about job security hasn't changed since the beginning of the year, and 15 percent say they're less worried about their job security. Sixteen percent of workers say they've never been worried about their job security:

Source: Bankrate's Worker Intentions Survey, June 6-16, 2025

Note: Percentages are of people who are employed or looking for employment

Of all generations, millennials are the likeliest to say they're more worried about their job security now compared to the beginning of the year:

■ Gen Z workers: 24 percent
■ Millennial workers: 33 percent
■ Gen X workers: 24 percent
■ Baby boomer workers: 1 in 5

Along party lines, Democrats and Independents are more worried about their job security than Republicans:

■ Democrats: 31 percent
■ Independents: 31 percent
■ Republicans: 17 percent

3 tips when looking for a new role in today's challenging job market

Today's job market isn't ideal for looking for a new role. But whether you're looking for a higher salary, better work-life balance or if you're just worried about your job security, there's a few things you can do to prepare for a job hunt.

"Most forecasters see inflation picking up and the job market weakening modestly over the next year," Hamrick says. "In any case, it is prudent for workers to keep their skills sharpened and their contacts activated. If one plans to look for work in the coming months or is forced into that situation by unemployment, these proactive steps should make for an easier transition."

1. Boost your savings

Before making any large life change, like starting a new job, it's important to make sure your finances – especially your savings – are up to snuff. Traditionally, a well-stocked emergency savings fund might have three to six months of expenses in it, but as more workers are unemployed for six months or more, you might want to consider keeping more than six months of expenses saved. This is also a smart move if you're concerned about your job security – the more money you have saved for emergencies, the more secure you may feel.

There are a few things you can do to increase the amount you save each month:

■ Create a budget, or update your budget if you haven't touched it in a while.

■ Review your spending habits for unwanted expenses and places where you can cut back. See if you can cut $50 to $100 of spending per month by cutting back on unused subscriptions, cooking more at home or renegotiating your bills.

■ Set a savings goal with a specific time period and amount, such as $5,000 in a year. This will help hold you accountable.

■ Automate your savings by setting a recurring transfer every time you're paid.

■ Keep your savings in a high-yield savings account, which will earn more interest than a traditional savings account, essentially offering a free boost to your savings.

2. Understand your strengths as a job candidate to help you negotiate

Job interviews are an exercise in marketing yourself. Before starting the interview process, write down three soft skills and three hard skills you bring to the table – include these in your resume, too. Soft skills could be communication, leadership, conflict management, teamwork, problem-solving or time management. Hard skills, on the other hand, could be any technical skills or certifications and degrees you've earned. Also, in your resume and in your interviews,note tangible accomplishments from the past few years. These could be new initiatives you've started, financial targets that you've met, ways you've optimized your work or other accomplishments.

Understanding your skills will help you be able to better negotiate when it's time to discuss salary and benefits, either when asking for a promotion at your current role or when you're looking for your next job. Even if it's an employer's job market, you should still advocate for equitable pay and benefits. Ask for what you deserve.

"Between the moves by the federal government, rapid advances in technology including artificial intelligence, and the changing global landscape, there is a high level of uncertainty but also plenty of opportunities," Hamrick says. "Workers with the right skill sets and can-do attitudes will be in the best position to win."

3. Connect with your network

If there were ever a time to go through that pile of business cards in the bottom of your desk drawer, now's it. Your network, whether that's connections on LinkedIn, former employers and colleagues, fellow college alumni or others in your community, are a great resource when looking for a new role. If you're looking for your next job, label yourself as "Open to Work" on LinkedIn and prioritize growing your network by reaching out to former colleagues or attending local networking events.

Methodology This survey has been conducted using an online interview administered to members of the YouGov Plc panel of individuals who have agreed to take part in surveys. All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. The total sample size was 2,000 U.S. adults, of whom 1,005 are working full-time or currently looking for full-time employment. Fieldwork was undertaken between June 6-16, 2025. The survey was carried out online and meets rigorous quality standards. It gathered a non-probability-based sample and employed demographic quotas and weights to better align the survey sample with the broader U.S. population.

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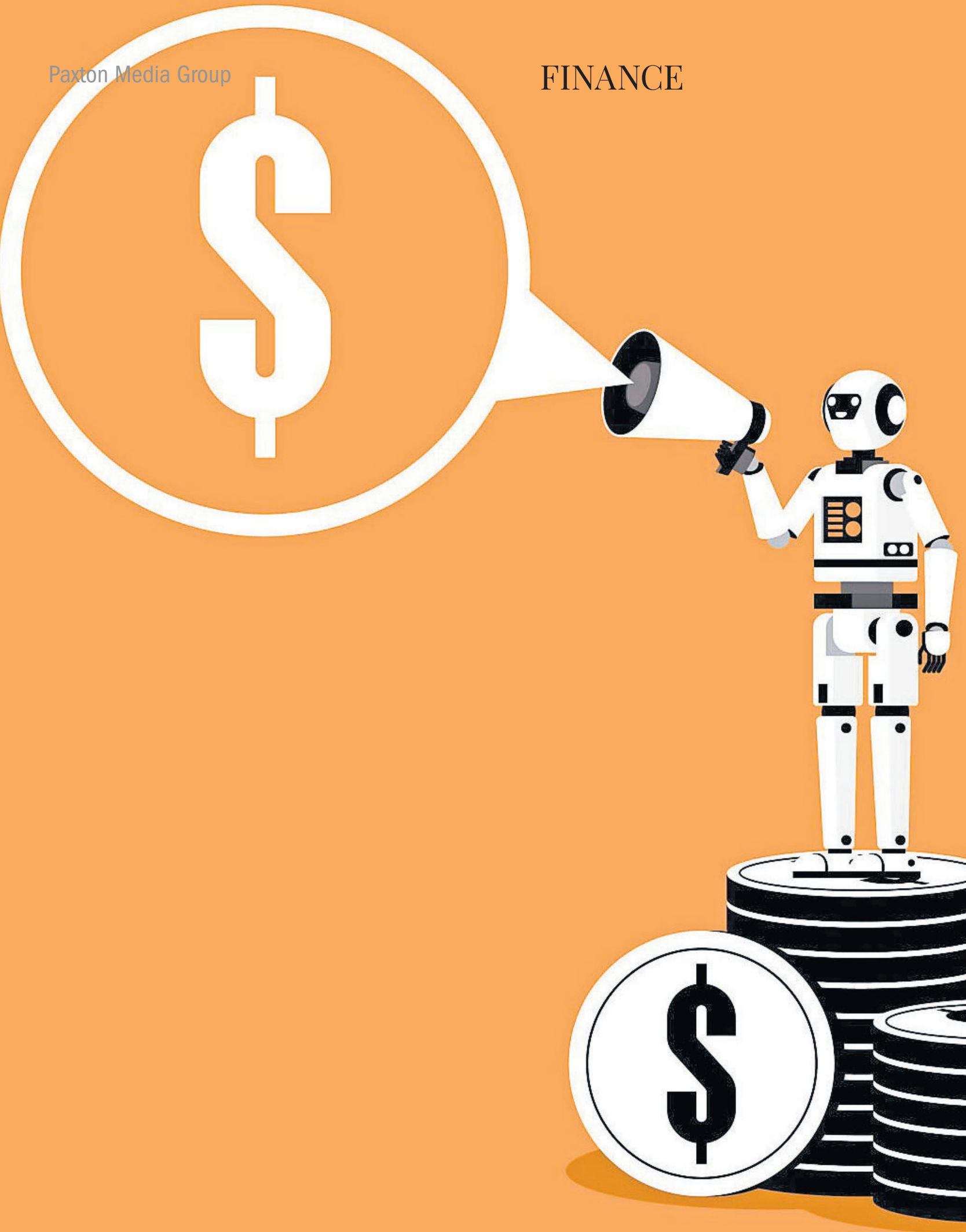
Photo from Dreamstime / TNS



sorbetto / Getty Images

What is personalized pricing, and how do I avoid it?

By JAY L. ZAGORSKY
Boston University (The Conversation)

Recently, Delta Air Lines announced it would expand its use of artificial intelligence to provide individualized prices to customers. This move sparked concern among flyers and politicians. But Delta isn't the only business interested in using AI this way. Personalized pricing has already spread across a range of industries, from finance to online gaming.

Customized pricing – where each customer receives a different price for the same product – is a holy grail for businesses because it boosts profits. With customized pricing, free-spending people pay more while the price-sensitive pay less. Just as clothes can be tailored to each person, custom pricing fits each person's ability and desire to pay.

I am a professor who teaches business school students how to set prices. My latest book, "The Power of Cash: Why Using Paper Money is Good for You and Society," highlights problems with custom pricing. Specifically, I'm worried that AI pricing models lack transparency and could unfairly take advantage of financially unsophisticated people.

The history of custom pricing

For much of history, customized pricing was the normal way things happened. In the past, business owners sized up each customer and then bargained face-to-face. The price paid depended on the buyer's and seller's bargaining skills – and desperation.

An old joke illustrates this process. Once, a very rich man was riding in his carriage at breakfast time. Hungry, he told his driver to stop at the next restaurant. He went inside, ordered some eggs and asked for the bill. When the owner handed him the check, the rich man was shocked at the price. "Are eggs rare in this neighborhood?" he asked. "No," the owner said. "Eggs are plentiful, but very rich men are quite rare."

Custom pricing through bargaining still exists in some industries. For example, car dealerships often negotiate a different price for each vehicle they sell. Economists refer to this as "first-degree" or "perfect" price discrimination, which is "perfect" from the seller's perspective because it allows them to charge each customer the maximum amount they're willing to pay.

Currently, most American shoppers don't bargain but instead see set prices. Many scholars trace the rise of set prices to John Wanamaker's Philadelphia department store, which opened in 1876. In his store, each item had a nonnegotiable price tag. These set prices made it simpler for customers to shop and became very popular.

THE CONVERSATION

Why uniform pricing caught on

Set prices have several advantages for businesses. For one thing, they allow stores to hire low-paid retail workers instead of employees who are experts in negotiation.

Historically, they also made it easier for stores to decide how much to charge. Before the advent of AI pricing, many companies determined prices using a "cost-plus" rule. Cost-plus means a business adds a fixed percentage or markup to an item's cost. The markup is the percentage added to a product's cost that covers a company's profits and overhead.

The big-box retailer Costco still uses this rule. It determines prices by adding a roughly 15 percent maximum markup to each item on the warehouse floor. If something costs Costco $100, they sell it for about $115.

The problem with cost-plus is that it treats all items the same. For example, Costco sells wine in many stores. People buying expensive Champagne typically are willing to pay a much higher markup than customers purchasing inexpensive boxed wine. Using AI gets around this problem by letting a computer determine the optimal markup item by item.

What personalized pricing means for shoppers

AI needs a lot of data to operate effectively. The shift from cash to electronic payments has enabled businesses to collect what's been called a "gold mine" of information. For example, Mastercard says its data lets companies "determine optimal pricing strategies."

So much information is collected when you pay electronically that in 2024 the Federal Trade Commission issued civil subpoenas to Mastercard, JPMorgan Chase and other financial companies demanding to know "how artificial intelligence and other technological tools may allow companies to vary prices using data they collect about individual consumers' finances and shopping habits." Experiments at the FTC show that AI programs can even collude among themselves to raise prices without human intervention.

To prevent customized pricing, some states have laws requiring retailers to display a single price for each product for sale. Even with these laws, it's simple to do custom pricing by using targeted digital coupons, which vary each shopper's discount.

How you can outsmart AI pricing

There are ways to get around customized pricing. All depend on denying AI programs data on past purchases and knowledge of who you are. First, when shopping in brick-and-mortar stores, use paper money. Yes, good old-fashioned cash is private and leaves no data trail that follows you online.

Second, once online, clear your cache. Your search history and cookies provide algorithms with extensive amounts of information. Many articles say the protective power of clearing your cache is an urban myth. However, this information was based on how airlines used to price tickets. Recent analysis by the FTC shows the newest AI algorithms are changing prices based on this cached information.

Third, many computer pricing algorithms look at your location, since location is a good proxy for income. I was once in Botswana and needed to buy a plane ticket. The price on my computer was about $200. Unfortunately, before booking I was called away to dinner. After dinner my computer showed the cost was $1,000 – five times higher. It turned out after dinner I used my university's VPN, which told the airline I was located in a rich American neighborhood. Before dinner I was located in a poor African town. Shutting off the VPN reduced the price.

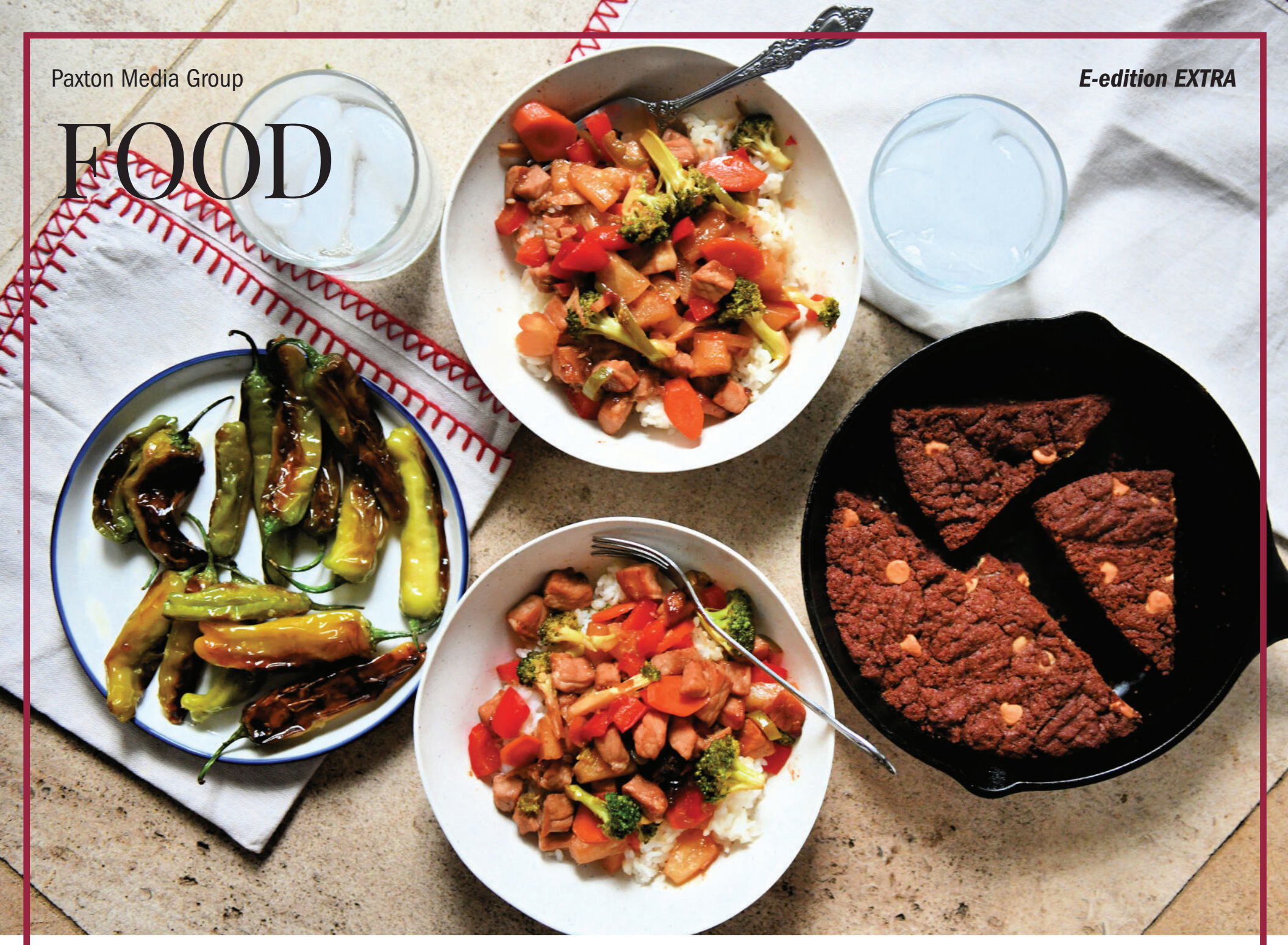
Last, often to get a better price in face-to-face negotiations, you need to walk away. To do this online, put something in your basket and then wait before hitting purchase. I recently bought eyeglasses online. As a cash payer, I didn't have my credit card handy. It took five minutes to find it, and the delay caused the site to offer a large discount to complete the purchase.

The computer revolution has created the ability to create custom products cheaply. The cashless society combined with AI is setting us up for customized prices. In a custom-pricing situation, seeing a high price doesn't mean something is higher quality. Instead, a high price simply means a business views the customer as willing to part with more money.

Using cash more often can help defeat custom pricing. In my view, however, rapid advances in AI mean we need to start talking now about how prices are determined, before customized pricing takes over completely.

Jay L. Zagorsky is an associate professor at Boston University's Questrom School of Business.

FOOD



Rice bowls are quick on prep, easy on the wallet

By GRETCHEN MCKAY
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (TNS)

Rice bowls topped with tasty slivers of beef, chicken, egg, tempura or seafood have ancient roots in Japan and other parts of Asia. But the hearty, one-bowl dishes are also incredibly popular on American tables, given their wide variety and ease of preparation.

These days, it's just as easy to find a smoothie-like acai bowl made with fresh fruit and granola when you're out to eat as it is a poke bowl comprised of raw fish, rice and other toppings. Ditto with a grain bowl that pairs a protein with fresh veggies for a complete meal.

When it comes to a making a dinner everyone will cheer, being able to customize ingredients is a big selling point, not just for flavor and texture but also dietary preferences and allergies. If you can't eat a certain food or just don't like it, there's usually a suitable substitute.

Bowls also are popular because they make it easy save a buck. Affordable, everyday staples like carrots, peppers and onions are often common ingredients. And because the meat or protein is chopped or sliced into bite-sized pieces, you can stretch what normally might feed one or two into something that satisfies three or four.

The same can be said for the sauces that ties everything together. Something as simple as soy sauce mixed with sugar and ginger can add lots of flavor for just pennies.

This budget menu for two makes the most of pork chops I got on sale, and a bag of one of my favorite (and easiest) appetizers of all time – shishitos to peppers.

If I don't have a list firmly in hand when I head to the grocery store, I usually have at least a fairly good idea of what I want to cook that day or week. But it also benefits home cooks to be flexible about the menu when they happen upon an ingredient that's priced just right.

This week, it was a 1-pound package of five boneless pork chops for $4.54 and a $1.19 can of pineapple. Along with some fresh veggies, they laid the groundwork for a nutritious and lower-cal rice bowl that took only about 20 minutes from start to finish in a hot pan and a rice cooker.

The shishitos, which you can sometimes find at farmers markets in summer and also in larger grocery stores, took even less time to prepare – around 8 minutes, or until they blister in spots when fried in a little oil.

At $3.99 for an 8-ounce bag, the peppers were definitely a splurge compared with the two rice bowls, which totaled just $6.83 (a mere $3.42 per serving). But they are so tasty, seasonal and easy to whip up I couldn't resist. Besides, haven't we all had our fill of salad as a starter?

Brownies won't start any trends when it comes to dessert, but when baked in a skillet, they're a bit more fun. In the past, I've enhanced brownies with chili powder and nuts; for this batch, I added white chocolate chips for a spot of color. But you won't go wrong with milk or dark chocolate chips or baking them naked without add-ins.

I built the bowls with inexpensive white rice to stay on a $15 budget, but if you're willing to spend a bit more they also can be made with any other favorite grain, including quinoa, brown rice, farro or even wheat berries.

As always in this on-going series, the final tally excludes ingredients I had on hand and you probably do, too – soy sauce, carrots, cooking oil, white sugar and vanilla. The most exciting purchase this week was eggs – just $2.99 a dozen at my local store, about half of what I was paying just a few months ago.

All told, I came out more than $2 under budget and even had leftovers.

Blistered Shishito Peppers
Serves 2

Native to Japan, but incredibly popular on American menus, shishito peppers are almost always eaten while they are bright green. (They turn red as they ripen.) They are hotter then bell peppers, but fall below jalapeños on the Scoville scale. But be forewarned: one in 10 packs some serious heat.

Here, the wrinkled peppers are quickly cooked in a hot pan or on a grill until they char and blister. All that's really needed to make them pop on the plate is a sprinkle of flaky salt. You also could go "fancy" and garnish them with a little citrus zest, some smoked paprika or a sprinkle of sumac, a tangy Mediterranean spice made from pulverized dried sumac berries.

2 ounces vegetable oil
8 ounces shishito peppers
Flaked sea salt

Heat oil in a 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium-high heat, just until it begins to smoke, about 3 minutes

Add peppers to pan and cook, without stirring, until skins are blistered, 3-5 minutes. Oil will pop, so you could use a lid on the skillet and leave it slightly ajar to avoid spatters.

Use tongs to flip the peppers. Continue cooking over medium-high heat until blistered on the other side, 3-5 minutes.

Transfer peppers to a serving dish and season generously with flaked salt. Let cool a minute or two before serving.

– Gretchen McKay, Post-Gazette

Pork Teriyaki Bowl
Serves 2

Whether you plan on eating your rice bowl with a spoon, fork or chopsticks, everything on top of the rice should be cut into bite-sized pieces. I used bell peppers and broccoli, but any favorite veggie that's in season works. Leave out the chilies if you want to tame the heat or add more if you prefer spicier dishes. Brown rice is always a more nutritious choice than white, but you gotta choose your battles, right?

1/2 pound boneless pork chops, cut into bite-sized chunks (around 3 pork chops)
2 tablespoons soy sauce, divided
1 tablespoon white sugar, divided
1 tablespoon cornstarch
2 tablespoons neutral oil
1/2 medium red bell pepper, stemmed, seeded and chopped
1/2 cup broccoli florets, sliced
1 or 2 thinly sliced carrots
1 cup cubed pineapple, canned or fresh
1 serrano or jalapeno chile, stemmed, seeded and thinly sliced
1-inch piece fresh ginger, peeled and cut into matchsticks
1/4 cup unseasoned rice vinegar
2 cups cooked white or brown rice, for serving
2 scallions, thinly sliced, for garnish, optional

In medium bowl, combine pork, 1 tablespoon soy sauce, 1/2 tablespoon sugar and the cornstarch, and toss until pork is evenly coated.

Add oil to a skillet and heat over medium-heat until shimmering.

Add pork in an even layer and cook, stirring occasionally, until pork is lightly browned, 4-5 minutes.

Add bell pepper, broccoli and carrot and cook, stirring occasionally, until vegetables are lightly browned and fork tender, 4-5 minutes.

Add pineapple, chilies and ginger, then cook, stirring occasionally, until pineapple begins to brown, about 2 minutes.

Stir in vinegar, remaining tablespoon soy sauce and another pinch or two of sugar. Cook, stirring often, until meat and vegetables are lightly coated with the sauce, 1-2 minutes.

Remove from heat, taste and season with more soy sauce and vinegar as needed.

Spoon cooked rice into two bowls. Divide pork mixture on top of rice, and sprinkle with the scallions, if desired.

– Adapted from "Milk Street: 365" by Christopher Kimball

Skillet Brownie Cookies
Serves 6-8

If you like, these easy dessert brownies can be mixed and baked in the same pan, reducing cleanup. For even more chocolate flavor, add chocolate chips. You could also stir in some coffee granules to intensify the richness. They are on the crumbly side, so if you can wait (we know – it's hard!) allow them to cool completely in the pan before cutting into wedges.

6 tablespoons butter, cut into 6 pieces
1 cup all-purpose flour
3 tablespoons cocoa powder
1/4 teaspoon baking soda
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 cup packed light brown sugar
2 tablespoons vegetable oil
1 large egg
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/2 cup semi-sweet or white chocolate chips or a mix

Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

Melt butter in a 10-inch cast-iron skillet over medium heat. Scrape butter into a bowl with a spatula and set skillet aside,

In medium bowl, whisk together flour, cocoa, baking soda and salt.

Add brown sugar and oil to bowl and stir until well combined.

Add egg and vanilla and whisk until smooth.

Add flour mixture to butter mixture and stir until just combined and no flour is visible. Add chocolate or white chocolate chips and stir until evenly distributed.

Scrape dough into the empty cast-iron skillet. Spread and push dough into an even layer covering the bottom of the skillet.

Transfer skillet to oven and bake until edges of cookie are set and top looks dry and shiny 16-18 minutes.

Remove skillet to a cooling rack, and let cool for 30 minutes.

Use a butter knife to cut cookie into wedges, being careful not to scratch surface of skillet. Serve.

– Adapted form "The Complete Cook Book for Teen Chefs" by America's Test Kitchen

QUICK FIX

Summer Eggplant Salad

By LINDA GASSENHEIMER
Tribune News Service (TNS)

This hearty summer salad is a celebration of the season's freshest vegetables. Roasted eggplant, juicy tomatoes, sweet red bell pepper, and peppery arugula come together to create a mix of vibrant textures and flavors. I added creamy Fontina cheese and crunchy croutons to turn it into a satisfying, no-fuss dinner.

To speed things up, I microwaved the eggplant first, then quickly sautéed it to give it a golden crust and rich flavor – easy, efficient, and perfect for summer evenings.

HELPFUL HINTS:

■ Any type of cheese can be used such as provolone, cheddar, or Edam.

■ Any type of bell pepper can be used.

Summer Eggplant Salad

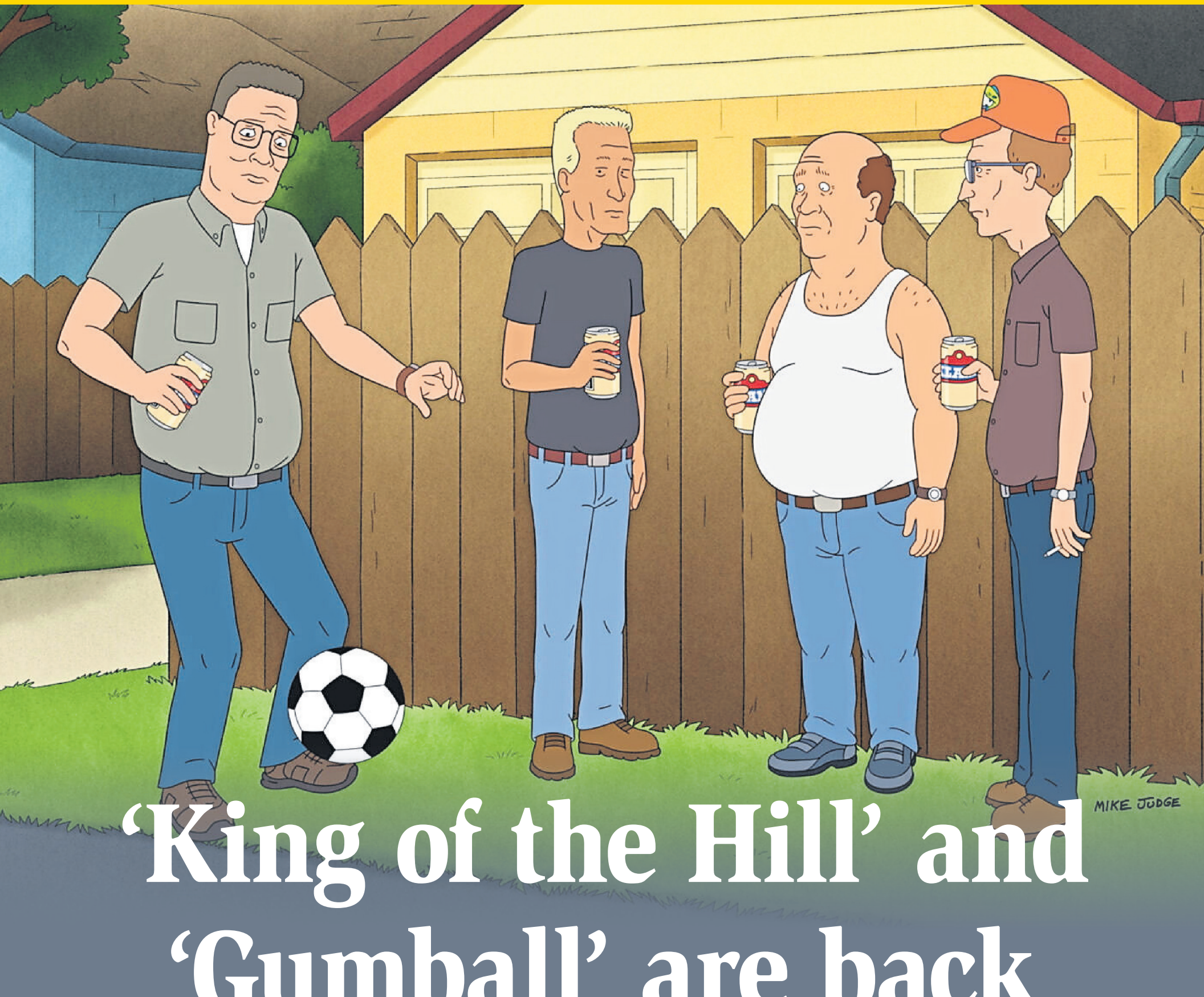
1 pound eggplant (makes 5 1/2 cups cubes)
2 teaspoons olive oil
1 cup red bell pepper (cut 1/2-inch pieces)
1 cup tomato cubes (cut into 1/2-inh pieces)
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
2 tablespoons reduced fat salad dressing
2 cups arugula leaves
1 cup Fontina cheese cubes (cut into 1/2-inch cubes)
1 cup croutons

Wash eggplant and cut into 1-inch slices. Cut the slices into cubes. Place them in a microwave-safe bowl and microwave on high 3 minutes. Heat oil in a large skillet and add the eggplant cubes. Toss in the oil for 2 minutes. They should be slightly golden and soft. Place the eggplant in a large bowl with the red bell pepper, and tomato. Sprinkle with salt and pepper to taste. Toss to combine ingredients. Place 1 cup arugula leaves each on two dinner plates. Divide the eggplant mixture in half and spoon over the over the arugula. Add 1/2 cup Fontina cheese to each plate. Drizzle the salad dressing over the salad. Add 1/2 cup croutons to each plate.

Yield 2 servings.

Linda Gassenheimer is the author of over 30 cookbooks, including her newest, "The 12-Week Diabetes Cookbook." Listen to Linda on www.WDNA.org and all major podcast sites. Email her at Linda@DinnerInMinutes.com.

ENTERTAINMENT



‘King of the Hill’ and ‘Gumball’ are back

I tell you what, it’s about time

By ROBERT LLOYD
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

I will say this: I should be watching more cartoons. It has been harder to indulge this passion for some of the best, most pleasurable work television has to offer with so many ordinary series fighting for my professional time and attention, but here and now I make a more or less midyear resolution to get back to them. Please hold me to it.

Two great animated series are posting new seasons after long hiatuses (neither on the original platform, both on Hulu). “King of the Hill,” which ran on Fox from 1997 to 2009, lives anew with 10 fresh episodes streaming Monday; “The Amazing World of Gumball” (2011-2019), one of the greatest products of a great age of Cartoon Network, is back as “The Wonderfully Weird World of Gumball,” in a 20-episode season now available. (Earlier seasons of both shows are available on the platform.) Each is under the protection of their original creators; both are their easily recognizable, extremely different old selves.

Visually, there is little to no difference between one multi-camera sitcom and the next, one single-camera mockumentary sitcom and the next, one single-camera non-mockumentary and the next, one CBS police procedural and the next. But every cartoon creates its individual grammar, its dynamic, its world, its synergy between the image and the actors, its level of awkwardness or slickness. (The voice actors, I mean – animators are also actors.) There are trends, of course, in shapes and line and ways to render a mouth or an eyeball, and much drawing is drawn from the history of the medium, because art influences artists. But the spectrum is wide, and novelty counts for a lot.

Created by Ben Bocquelet, “Gumball” doesn’t settle for a single style – that is to say, not settling is its style. The characters comprise a hodgepodge, nay, an encyclopedia of visual references, dimensions, materials and degrees of resolution, and include traditional 2-D animation, puppet animation, photo collage and live-action, usually set against a photographic background and knit into a world whose infinite variety seems nothing short of inevitable. (Netflix’s late ”The Epic Tales of Captain Underpants” is the only other cartoon with such a range of modes.

Like many modern cartoons (excepting anime, which I would argue is a different, if widely influential, art), its main characters are children. Gumball, currently voiced by Alkaio Thiele, is a blue cat, the son of a cat mother and a rabbit father; he has a pink rabbit little sister, Anais (Kinza Syed Khan), and an adoptive brother, Darwin (Hero Hunter in the new season), a pet goldfish who grew legs and gets around quite easily in the air. Their middle-school classmates include a ghost, a cloud, a banana, an ice cream cone, a daisy, a balloon, a cactus, a T. Rex and a flying eyeball. Gumball’s girlfriend, Penny (Teresa Gallagher) is a shape-shifting yellow fairy. Each is rendered in a different style, and that is just the tip of the animated iceberg.

Like the best cartoons ostensibly made for kids, it doesn’t underestimate its audience, what it might understand or can handle. Many “Gumball” episodes devolve into a sort of authentically disturbing horror movie, including the last episode of the original series, which saw the characters frighteningly transformed into realistic animated children and a void opening just before the closing credits. It also demonstrates an adult skepticism about the world that might profitably infect young minds. There are critiques of capitalism, consumerism and online culture: In the first episode of the new season, an evil talking hamburger controls the corporate universe; in another, mother Nicole (Gallagher again) is seduced into virtual reality by a lonely, jealous chatbot.

The decade and a half since “King of the Hill” went off the air – surreptitiously, if obviously, referenced in a remark about “that cooking show that Fox stupidly canceled 15 years ago” – is not exactly represented in the new season, but time has passed. (The characters did not age 13 years over the original series – but they grew a little.) Hank, voiced by co-creator Mike Judge, and Peggy Hill (Kathy Najimy), returning to Arlen, Texas, from Saudi Arabia, where Hank had been exercising his expertise in all things propane, are drawn older by the addition of a few wrinkles but are substantially unchanged. As a character, Hank, of course, distrusts change, though possibly not as much as the friends who gather, as before, in the alley behind his house; indeed, he worries that the love of soccer he acquired while away will reduce his standing in their eyes. Peggy, on the other hand, was enlarged by her time away; she likes to demonstrate a few words of Arabic. Both Hills are dealing uncomfortably with retirement; he looks for odd jobs, takes a stab at making beer (not that fruit-flavored stuff); she exercises.

The show is set in an awkwardly drawn but highly evocative, extremely ordinary environment that perfectly serves its stories; it feels like an accurate outsider-art rendition of its middle-class Texas suburb. There is little in it that couldn’t be handled as live-action situation comedy; indeed, for long stretches you can close your eyes and let it play in your head like an old-time radio show – “Ozzie and Harriet,” or ”Vic and Sade” for the deep cut – which testifies to the quality of the writing and the performances. (Judge’s voice has an unschooled quality that perfectly matches the drawing. I was once almost certain that Hank’s voice was that of my friend Will Ray, a country-music guitar slinger – which would have made sense, given Judge’s interest in the music and his occasional moonlighting as a bass player. That is neither here or there, but I am happy to have found a place to mention it.)

Hank, Boomhauer, Bill and Dale are back in their usual haunt, the alley behind Hank’s home, in the “King of the Hill” revival.
Mike Judge / Hulu / Disney / TNS

Their son, Bobby (Pamela Adlon), is now an adult; little dots on his chin indicate either that he can grow a beard but neglects to shave or that he can’t quite grow a beard; it doesn’t seem exactly like a choice. A formerly established talent for cooking – the final episode of the original run concerned his ability to judge the quality of a cut of meat – has blossomed into his becoming a restaurateur, offering a fusion of Japanese and Texas cuisine; he is evidently good at this, though for whatever reason – more work to draw them? – his restaurant is devoid of customers. The torch he carries for sometime girlfriend Connie Souphanousinphone (Lauren Tom) occupies the other half of his storyline here.

There are light topical references – a sidelong joke about the names billionaires give their children, for example – but the show happily lives in its world of day-to-day annoyances and victories. Hank is excited by a trip to the George W. Bush presidential library, but one can’t imagine him with any affection for the current Oval Office occupant; he’s too common-sense for that. Extreme views and conspiracy theories are loaded into Hank’s pest exterminator friend Dale Gribble. The late Johnny Hardwick, who voiced him for the first six episodes of the new season, was replaced by Toby Huss. (Jonathan Joss, who played the character John Redcorn, died in a shooting this June.) Cartoons have a way of dealing with death – they don’t have to – and time means no more there than the animators want it to. It’s a comfortable state of being.

Katy Kildee / The Detroit News / TNS

Eminem performs during "Live from Detroit: The Concert at Michigan Central" on June 6, 2024, in Detroit. Eminem's relationship with his fans is detailed in the documentary "Stans."

MOVIE REVIEW

'Stans' is Eminem's story, as told through his most dedicated fans

By ADAM GRAHAM
The Detroit News (TNS)

In 2000 Eminem wrote "Stan," a cautionary tale of a crazed fan who took his obsession with the rapper several steps too far. A quarter-century later, "Stan" is now used as a term of endearment, and even a verb, by fans who proudly "stan" their favorite artists.

Eminem's relationship with his "Stan" army, and his own personal rags to riches tale, is detailed in "Stans," director Steven Leckart's look at fandom, connection and the parasocial relationship we court with our top celebrities. Eminem's Stans won't find too much new information in the documentary, but they'll likely see themselves in the handful of superfans whose own personal obsessions with the rapper are examined.

Eminem's well-traversed tale – from finding his voice in hip-hop and honing his skills in Detroit, eventually meeting Dr. Dre and becoming one of rap's most celebrated talents, only to be imprisoned by his own fame and hitting rock bottom following the death of his best friend and mentor, to later triumphing over his personal demons and finding balance on the other side, on his own terms – lays the backbone for the story. Eminem is on hand, as are pals and VIP players such as Dre, LL Cool J, Ed Sheeran, Carson Daly, Jimmy Iovine and Adam Sandler.

'Stans'

Grade: B

No MPA rating (language, adult themes)

Running time: 1:42

How to watch: In theaters Aug. 7-10

Along the way we also meet a handful of fans, identified by their first names (Noah, Brendan and Zolt, for starters), who share their stories of what Eminem means to them, and which parts of their stories relate most closely to his. One fan has the Guinness Record for most tattoos of a single artist, another is a trans fan who found themself through Eminem's art. There's the fan who writes their own Eminem fan fiction, and so on.

Those fans help break up the story of Eminem, giving "Stans" an unconventional telling. But those individual fans don't add a lot of depth to the story because we don't know enough about them to invest in their personal narratives. We just know they really like Eminem.

"Stans" has several local touches, with shout-outs to Gilbert's Lodge in St. Clair Shores and legendary Detroit club Saint Andrew's Hall. Eminem visits the site of his childhood home, along Dresden Street in Detroit, and there's footage of Eminem shooting his "Recovery" album cover along Dutton Road in Auburn Hills.

"Stans" isn't the be-all, end-all telling of Eminem's tale, but it puts his stamp on it for now, using the lens of his fans to give it perspective.

Director Leckart averts an obvious moment of fan exultation (and audience satisfaction) by not having his subjects meet their hero; even while Eminem praises his fans, Marshall Mathers retains his mystery, as well as his elusivity. That doesn't change just because the cameras are rolling, for Stans or for anyone else.

SERIES REVIEW

With the must-watch *'Demascus,'* Tubi rescues a reality-bending comedy

By ROBERT LLOYD
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

The road to "Demascus" – which premiered Thursday on Tubi – runs through AMC, which had commissioned the series and then, though a six-episode season was completed, declined to air it. Not being privy to any boardroom discussions or the thoughts of executives and accountants, I won't claim to know why that was – most everything these days is a calculation instead of a gamble. But simply as regards its quality, AMC was wrong and Tubi is right.

Created by playwright Tearrance Arvelle Chisholm ("Hooded: Or Being Black for Dummies"), it sits alongside some of the most interesting series of the last several years – comedies from Black creators that mess with form and time and space and reality – "I'm a Virgo,""Government Cheese,""The Vince Staples Show" and "Atlanta" and the cartoons "Lazor Wulf" and "Oh My God ... Yes!" Perhaps if one already feels outside the system, there's less temptation to play it safe. It's not necessarily a recipe for success in the show-business terms, but it can produce good results.

Demascus (Okieriete Onaodowan), 33, is entering his "Jesus year, my year to be a martyr, and I've chosen this to be my martyrdom." That martyrdom is therapy, he tells Dr. Bonnetville (Janet Hubert), as the series begins in a jungle – though this turns out to be a Holodeck projection. We're in a version of 2023 – the year the series was first set to air – in which self-driving cars fill the road and a voice-activated assistant (here called Shekinah, played by Brie Eley) is everywhere, setting the stage for the series' science-fictional central conceit.

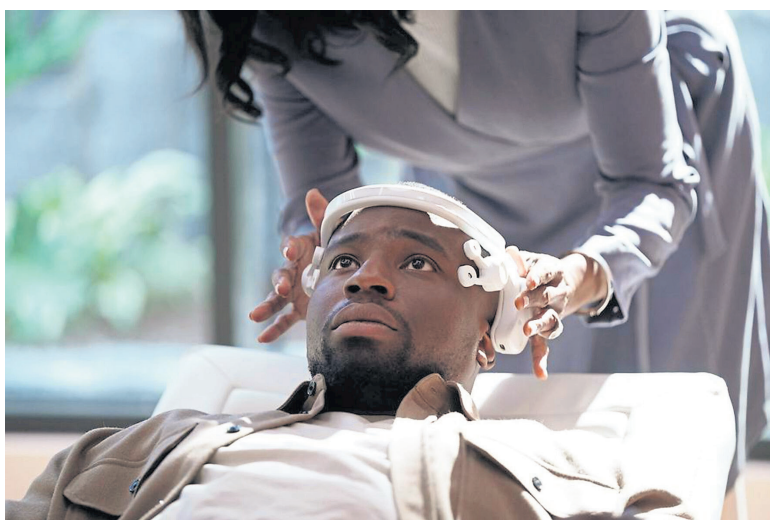
'Demascus'

Rating: TV-MA

How to watch: Tubi

"Nobody knows me. My one dominant quality is I'm unknowable," Demascus tells her. "I can be anybody or nobody. … That's a good quality for a Black man to have, right?" But does he know himself?

Bonnetville suggests that Demascus might be a candidate for DIRT (Digital Immersive Reality Therapy), an experimental psychological virtual alternate reality rig that "follows the path of your conscious and subconscious impulses, allowing you to visit alternate visions of yourself, but only as a voyeur. … Attempting to take control of a narrative can permanently corrupt your primary reality." (Of course he will do just that.) But just what reality is primary is something the series purposely confuses and doesn't quite settle or really needs to. The gizmo is an excuse for episodes and parts of episodes set in various contexts that work both as short stories and pieces of a bigger puzzle, and as a bonus allows the main cast to try on different roles – in repertory, if you will.



Jace Downs / AMC Networks / Tubi / TNS

Okieriete Onaodowan stars in "Demascus."

In what may or may not be his primary reality, Demascus is a graphic artist employed by the government – he's working on a campaign to encourage Black participation in the space program – which makes for some office-based satire. He has a best friend, Redd (Caleb Eberhardt), a District of Columbia public defender, who will reappear in other forms (in one episode, "Thanksgiving," they're a couple); an uncle, Forty (Martin Lawrence), now dissolute, now respectable; and, in some scenarios, a sister, Shaena (Brittany Adebumola). He's slowly losing interest in his "algorithmically compatible" girlfriend, Budhi (Sasha Hutchings), and becoming interested in Naomi (Shakira Ja'nai Paye), who appears variously as an artist, a nun and a nurse in a psychiatric ward. There's a tentative pan-dimensional love story between them, the sort of thing that could easily be overdone, but is just … nice.

The series itself takes different forms – a relationship reality show, a "sad Thanksgiving" domestic comedy, a setting out of "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest." Notwithstanding a change of hair or profession, Demascus remains more or less himself as shapes shift around him – the protagonist, basically a good guy, a little buttoned-up, a little insecure. He's surrounded by more colorful, unpredictable characters, more acted upon than acting and dealing with the same issues from scenario to scenario. "There are rules and I know some of them and there are rules that I don't know and they're just ever-changing," he tells Dr. Bonnetville.

According to press materials, the show explores the "gulf between Black male perspectives" and as with any culturally specific work, it may play to an audience that shares those specifics. But like all good art, it doesn't limit its meanings to the artist's statement. "Demascus" isn't parochial or polemical; the emotional beats are accessible to any moderately sensitive human. And there's pure pleasure to be found in the writing, which is sharp and smart and natural; the direction, which shapes and is shaped by the evolving material without getting in its way; and uniformly marvelous performances.

I finished the sixth episode, titled "Season Two Prequel" (following the penultimate episode, "Penultimate"), wanting more, though that possibility, given the series' previous wandering in the wilderness, seems an open question. A line of dialogue hearkens back to the beginning in a way that might be thought of as closure, as a circle closes without going anywhere, and yet things are not the same. An ending you can take as a beginning, as with any fairy tale or romantic comedy, it's a beautifully managed moment, as J. Cole's "Love Yourz" – "No such thing as a life that's better than yours" and "It's beauty in the struggle" – makes its complementary points on the soundtrack.

King Gizzard & the Lizard Wizard perform at the Salt Shed on June 11, 2023, in Chicago.
Armando L. Sanchez / Chicago Tribune / TNS

King Gizzard & the Lizard Wizard talk going orchestral at Hollywood Bowl, and finally saying *'F--- Spotify'*

By AUGUST BROWN
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

LOS ANGELES — Need a model for how to thrive in the stranglehold of the modern music economy? How about a band of Australian garage-rockers who cut albums at the pace of an Atlanta rap crew, tour like peak-era Grateful Dead and who just told the biggest company in streaming to go to hell.

King Gizzard & the Lizard Wizard are a fascinating phenomenon in rock. Over 15 years, their LPs have flitted between genres with insouciant musicianship, pulling from punky scuzz, regal soul, krautrock, electro-funk and psychedelia. These LPs come at an insane clip – sometimes up to five in a year, 27 so far. Their freewheeling live shows made them a coveted arena act, when few new rock bands can aspire to that.

Two weeks ago, they became probably the most high-profile band to take their music off Spotify in the wake of Chief Executive Daniel Ek's investments in an AI-driven weapons firm. The band self-releases on its own labels – they needed no one's permission.

King Gizzard returns to the Hollywood Bowl on Sunday, this time backed by the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra for a live read of its new album "Phantom Island," a standout LP that adds deft orchestration to its toolkit. The band's frontman, Stu Mackenzie, spoke to The Times about giving Spotify the boot, how the L.A. Phil inspired the new record's arrangements and what they've figured out about staying afloat while artists get squeezed from all sides today.

Q: What was your initial reaction to Daniel Ek's investments in an AI arms company?

A: A bit of shock, and then feeling that I shouldn't be shocked. We've been saying f--- Spotify for years. In our circle of musician friends, that's what people say all the time, for all of these other reasons which are well documented. We saw a couple of other bands who we admire, and thought "I don't really want our music to be here, at least right now." I don't really consider myself an activist, and I don't feel comfortable soapboxing. But this feels like a decision staying true to ourselves, and doing what we think is is right for our music, having our music in places that we feel all right about.

Q: Was choosing to leave a complicated decision for the band?

A: The thing that made it hard was I do want to have our music be accessible to people. I don't really care about making money from streaming. I know it's unfair, and I know they are banking so much. But for me personally, I just want to make music, and I want people to be able to listen to it. The hard part was to take that away from so many people. But sometimes you've just got to say, "Well, sorry, we're not going to be here right now." In the end, it actually was just one quick phone call with the other guys to get off the ship.

As the sizes of everything gets larger, all of the stakes start to feel higher. I grapple with that, because that's not the kind of band that I like to be in, where it feels like everything is high stakes. I do miss the time where we could just do anything without any consequences, but I still try really hard to operate like that. In the past, I have felt tied to it, that we have to be there. But with this band, we have been happy to take a lot of risks, and for the most part, I'm just happy to see what happens if we just choose the path that feels right for us.

Q: Do you think Spotify noticed or cares that you left?

A: I don't expect Daniel Ek to pay attention to this. We have made a lot of experimental moves with the way we've released records – bootlegging stuff for free. We have allowed ourselves a license to break conventions, and the people who listen to our music have a trust and a faith to go along on this ride together. I feel grateful to have the sort of fan base you'll just trust, even when you do something a little counterintuitive. It feels like an experiment to me, like, "Let's just go away from Spotify, and let's see what happens." Why does this have to be a big deal? It actually feels like we're just trying to find our own positivity in a dark situation.

Q: "Phantom Island" is a really distinct record in your catalog for using so much orchestration. I heard some conversations with the L.A. Phil planted the seed for it?

A: We played this Hollywood Bowl show a little over two years ago, and being the home stadium of the L.A. Phil, we naturally chatted with them at the show. It did plant a seed of doing a show there backed by the orchestra. We happened to be halfway through making a record at that exact time that we weren't really sure how to finish. When we started talking about doing a show backed by an orchestra, we thought, "Let's just make an album with an orchestra." We rearranged and rewrote these songs with a composer, Chad Kelly. We knew the songs needed something, and we ended up rewriting the songs to work for a rock band in a symphonic medium.

Q: Were there any records you looked to for how to make that approach work? I hear a lot of ELO in there, Isaac Hayes, maybe the Beatles' "A Day in the Life."

A: To be completely honest, I just don't think there was a model for it. I think we landed on something that we only could have made because we wrote the songs not knowing there were going to be orchestral parts. When you ask me what were the touchstones, well, there weren't any. I was probably thinking of a lot of music from the early '60s, a lot of soul and R&B music at that time, which had often had orchestral arrangements. Etta James, for instance, was in the tone and the feel. This isn't the perfect way to do it, but it was a really serendipitous process.

Q: Your live shows are pretty raucous to say the least; how did you adapt to keep that feeling with orchestras behind you on this tour?

A: I was pretty anxious, to be honest. We only had one rehearsal the day before the first show. We had to go in and cross our fingers, like, "OK, I think that's going to work. I'm just going to hope that it translates." Our rehearsal was the most intense two and a half hours, but for the show, you're just like, "All right, this is it." You've just got to commit to what's on the page.

We've had some really awesome people collaborating with us – Sean O'Laughlin did the arrangements for the live shows, and Sarah Hicks is an amazing conductor. We're just a garage rock band from Australia; we're very lucky to get to honestly work with the best of the best.

Q: On the other end of the venue spectrum, what was it like playing a residency in a Lithuanian prison?

A: It was a real prison until really recently [Lukiškes Prison 2.0 in Vilnius, Lithuania]. The history is very dark – like, very, very dark. But there are artist spaces there now, and it's quite a culturally positive force. They're the things that make you restore your faith in humanity. You spend so much of your life losing faith in it, and then you go to places like that, and you're like, "Yeah, humans are okay."

Q: Speaking of threats to humanity, I think your band contests the idea that artists need to use AI to make enough music to be successful on streaming. You're proof you can make a ton of music quickly, with real people.

A: Making music is fun as f—, especially making music with other people. That's a deeply motivating factor, and we just have a ton of fun making music together. It feels human, it feels spiritual, it feels social. It's deeply central to who we all are as human beings. And it doesn't feel hard. It doesn't feel like we're fighting against some AI trend or anything. We just make music because it feels good.

Q: You're an arena act with your own label, and pretty autonomous as a band. Do you think you've figured out something important about how to be successful in the modern music economy?

A: I think we've been good at asking internal questions, and questioning what everybody else does and whether we need to do that or not. Sometimes we do the same thing that everybody else does. Sometimes we do something completely different because it makes sense to us. I think we've been quite good at being true to ourselves and being confident, or maybe reckless enough to do that.

I do think there's some serendipity and fate in the personalities of the other guys in the band, and the people that we work with, who have have also been on a pretty unconventional journey and have faith that – in the least pretentious way possible – that other people will dig it, and not worry too much about the other other stuff.

Q: Do you hope to see more and bigger bands striking out on their own, since the big institutions of the music business have yet again proven to not really reflect their values?

A: I just know what has worked for us, and I'm not sure that means that it'll work for other people. I don't know if there's a model in it. If there is a model, it's that you don't have to follow a path if you don't want to. The well-treaded path is going to work for some people, but you don't have to stay on that.

I think one thing about this band is that we've all been at peace with failing. That if this all fell apart and we went back home and we got regular jobs, I think we would say, "Well, we're proud of ourselves. We had a good time." We did what we wanted to do and just suffered the consequences along the way. We're probably being reckless enough to make potentially selfish decisions over and over again. But people, for some reason, want to come out and see us do that, and we're super grateful.

BOOKS

Do you really need to read to learn?

What neuroscience says about reading versus listening

By STEPHANIE N. DEL TUFO
University of Delaware

THE CONVERSATION

"Do we need to read, or can we just get everything through audio, like podcasts and audiobooks?" – Sebastian L., 15, Skanderborg, Denmark

Let's start with a thought experiment: Close your eyes and imagine what the future might look like in a few hundred years.

Are people intergalactic travelers zooming between galaxies? Maybe we live on spaceships, underwater worlds or planets with purple skies.

Now, picture your bedroom as a teenager of the future. There's probably a glowing screen on the wall. And when you look out the window, maybe you see Saturn's rings, Neptune's blue glow or the wonders of the ocean floor.

Now ask yourself: Is there a book in the room?

Open your eyes. Chances are, there's a book nearby. Maybe it's on your nightstand or shoved under your bed. Some people have only one; others have many.

You'll still find books today, even in a world filled with podcasts. Why is that? If we can listen to almost anything, why does reading still matter?

As a language scientist, I study how biological factors and social experiences shape language. My work explores how the brain processes spoken and written language, using tools like MRI and EEG.

Whether reading a book or listening to a recording, the goal is the same: understanding. But these activities aren't exactly alike. Each supports comprehension in different ways. Listening doesn't provide all the benefits of reading, and reading doesn't offer everything listening does. Both are important, but they are not interchangeable.

Different brain processes

Your brain uses some of the same language and cognitive systems for both reading and listening, but it also performs different functions depending on how you're taking in the information.

When you read, your brain is working hard behind the scenes. It recognizes the shapes of letters, matches them to speech sounds, connects those sounds to meaning, then links those meanings across words, sentences and even whole books. The text uses visual structure such as punctuation marks, paragraph breaks or bolded words to guide understanding. You can go at your own speed.

Listening, on the other hand, requires your brain to work at the pace of the speaker. Because spoken language is fleeting, listeners must rely on cognitive processes, including memory to hold onto what they just heard.

Speech is also a continuous stream, not neatly separated words. When someone speaks, the sounds blend together in a process called coarticulation. This requires the listener's brain to quickly identify word boundaries and connect sounds to meanings. Beyond identifying the words themselves, the listener's brain must also pay attention to tone, speaker identity and context to understand the speaker's meaning.

'Easier' is relative – and contextual

Many people assume that listening is easier than reading, but this is not usually the case. Research shows that listening can be harder than reading, especially when the material is complex or unfamiliar.

Listening and reading comprehension are more similar for simple narratives, like fictional stories, than for nonfiction books or essays that explain facts, ideas or how things work. My research shows that genre affects how you read. In fact, different kinds of texts rely on specialized brain networks. Fictional stories engage regions of the brain involved in social understanding and storytelling. Nonfiction texts, on the other hand, rely on a brain network that helps with strategic thinking and goal-directed attention.

Reading difficult material tends to be easier than listening from a practical standpoint, as well. Reading lets you move around within the text easily, rereading particular sections if you're struggling to understand, or underlining important points to revisit later. A listener who is having trouble following a particular point must pause and rewind, which is less precise than scanning a page and can interrupt the flow of listening, impeding understanding.

Even so, for some people, like those with developmental dyslexia, listening may be easier. Individuals with developmental dyslexia often struggle to apply their knowledge of written language to correctly pronounce written words, a process known as decoding. Listening allows the brain to extract meaning without the difficult process of decoding.

Engaging with the material

One last thing to consider is engagement. In this context, engagement refers to being mentally present, actively focusing, processing information and connecting ideas to what you already know.

People often listen while doing other things, like exercising, cooking or browsing the internet – activities that would be hard to do while reading. When researchers asked college students to either read or listen to a podcast on their own time, students who read the material performed significantly better on a quiz than those who listened. Many of the students who listened reported multitasking, such as clicking around on their computers while the podcast played. This is particularly important, as paying attention appears to be more important for listening comprehension than reading comprehension.

So, yes, reading still matters, even when listening is an option. Each activity offers something different, and they are not interchangeable.

The best way to learn is not by treating books and audio recordings as the same, but by knowing how each works and using both to better understand the world.

Hello, curious kids! Do you have a question you'd like an expert to answer? Ask an adult to send your question to CuriousKidsUS@theconversation.com. Please tell us your name, age and the city where you live.

And since curiosity has no age limit – adults, let us know what you're wondering, too. We won't be able to answer every question, but we will do our best.

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The Conversation is an independent and nonprofit source of news, analysis and commentary from academic experts.

Curious Kids is a series for children of all ages. If you have a question you'd like an expert to answer, send it to CuriousKidsUS@theconversation.com.

BESTSELLERS

Here are the bestsellers for the week that ended Saturday, July 26, compiled from data from independent and chain bookstores, book wholesalers and independent distributors nationwide, powered by Circana BookScan.

Hardcover fiction

1. Not Quite Dead Yet. Holly Jackson. Bantam
2. The Hamptons Lawyer. Patterson/Lupica. Little, Brown
3. Atmosphere. Taylor Jenkins Reid. Ballantine
4. JoJo's Bizarre Adventure: Part 7 – Steel Ball Run, Vol. 2. Hirohiko Araki. Viz
5. The Enchanted Greenhouse. Sarah Beth Durst. Bramble
6. Arcana Academy. Elise Kova. Del Rey
7. An Inside Job. Daniel Silva. Harper
8. Never Flinch. Stephen King. Scribner
9. The Wedding People. Alison Espach. Holt
10. My Friends. Fredrik Backman. Atria

Hardcover nonfiction

1. The Let Them Theory. Mel Robbins. Hay House
2. The Idaho Four. Patterson/Ward. Little, Brown
3. Don't Believe Everything You Think (expanded ed.). Joseph Nguyen. Authors Equity
4. The Greatest Story Ever Told. Bear Grylls. Hodder Faith
5. The Next Conversation. Jefferson Fisher. Tarcher
6. My Good Side. Scheana Shay. Grand Central
7. Everything Is Tuberculosis. John Green. Crash Course
8. The Wishbone Kitchen Cookbook. Meredith Hayden. Ten Speed
9. Butler. Salena Zito. Center Street
10. Abundance. Klein/Thompson. Avid Reader

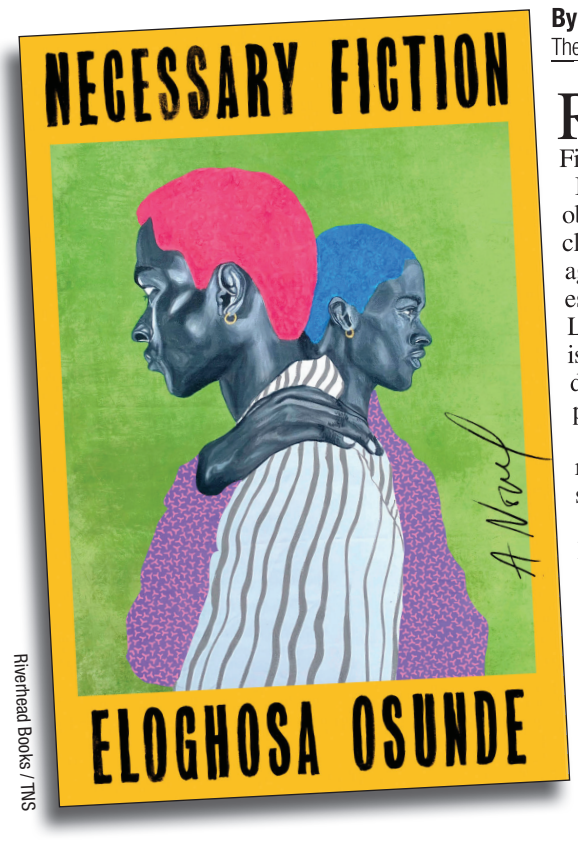
Trade paperback

1. Do Not Disturb. Freida McFadden. Poisoned Pen
2. One Golden Summer. Carley Fortune. Berkley
3. Caught Up. Navessa Allen. Slowburn
4. All the Colors of the Dark. Chris Whitaker. Crown
5. Lights Out. Navessa Allen. Slowburn
6. The Tenant. Freida McFadden. Poisoned Pen
7. Remarkably Bright Creatures. Shelby Van Pelt. Ecco
8. Fourth Wing. Rebecca Yarros. Red Tower
9. Problematic Summer Romance. Ali Hazelwood. Berkley
10. Iron Flame. Rebecca Yarros. Red Tower

Reprinted from Publishers Weekly.

REVIEW

Keep a character list handy for 'Necessary Fiction'



Riverhead Books / TNS

By ANGELA AJAYI
The Minnesota Star Tribune (TNS)

Reading Nigerian writer Eloghosa Osunde's sophomore novel, "Necessary Fiction," is an immersive experience.

Inventively bold and affecting, its obsessions go deep but are crystal clear. What does it mean, Osunde asks again and again, to love and be loved, especially as a queer person living in Lagos, Nigeria – where homosexuality is still criminalized, where you could be disowned or killed for loving the wrong person?

The answer lies in the churning, interior lives of the novel's characters, each spun out as mostly individual stories suffused with tenderness and light. But here's a tip: Keep that list of characters at the beginning of the book close at hand because, like Osunde's debut "Vagabonds!," this new novel, with its nonexistent plot and shifting points of view, is packed with dozens of multifaceted characters that are hard to keep track of. Multigenerational as well, they include sons and their father, mothers and their daughters, students at a boarding school and more.

First, we meet Ziz, a straight-shooting, hustler type who makes enough money to live on his own terms as a gay man in Lagos. "I'm that guy that gets [expletive] done. Simple. Kick me out of the house at fifteen ... and watch me grow some real useful muscle."

Rejected by an abusive and intolerant father, Ziz, like his best friend Maro, finds a true sense of belonging elsewhere, in partners, in a circle of queer friends who have similar experiences. There's also main character May, a DJ, whose mother is mentally ill and whose father's "unending charisma and gaslighting" broke their family apart. Like Ziz, May is a rebel who rejects societal expectations to live more authentically among other "queer creatives."

But while Ziz and May's family lives are heartbreaking, Osunde denies them a kind of hopelessness. In fact, she denies all characters this hopelessness: "Life had almost tricked them into thinking other things but the truth was: they were still young, still loved, still hurt in hidden places but not alone, not alone, especially in the dark." And they had a unique way of coping: "We all had lies we needed to tell ourselves and others if we were going to live well … there's already a term for that type of lie: necessary fictions."

When two female characters, Yemisi and Awele, meet in boarding school, they are drawn to each other romantically until a painful separation is forced upon them by an abusive parent. Yemisi is an aspiring photographer and Awele is a writer; they survive on a fair amount of self-compassion and creativity too.

But not all the parents in "Necessary Fiction" are harsh and unyielding; Maro's father Tega provides a loving, safe space for Akin, an aspiring musician struggling with his own father's death, among other things. By the end of the book, it is Akin's success that brings most of the characters together – too conveniently, plot-wise – in a kind of lovefest.

Set in recent years, "Necessary Fiction" is not exactly a slog but definitely not a breeze of a read. Here's another tip: If you're invested in a journey that is more about transcendence than pain, more about resolution than conflict, then reread the book. Then, you can lean into Osunde's stylishly heady prose while also savoring some surprising highlights, the pidgin English straight out of fast-moving Lagos (if you can) and global music references, along the way.

AUTOMOTIVE

AUTO REVIEWS

Genesis G80 gets comfortable in its own skin

By HENRY PAYNE
The Detroit News (TNS)

Hyundai's luxury brand, Genesis, announced this year its intent to enter the world of elite motorsports in 2026 – joining the big boys in the IMSA Weathertech/WEC World Endurance Championship's Hyper class.

It's a natural progression for a brand that makes the terrific G80 sedan that I just stormed Michigan's twisties with. The fastback sedan is a looooong way from the G80 I first tested in 2015.

Cresting a hill on M-32 west of Gaylord, I floored the throttle – accessing all 375 horsepower of the twin-turbo V-6 engine in front of me. Standard all-wheel drive translated 391 pound-feet of torque to the road and the big sedan surged forward. Big as in 4,600 pounds, which is hardly a lightweight in the midsize luxe aisle. But in SPORT PLUS mode, electronic suspension firmed the ride to reduce body roll.

I rushed a series of S-turns like Lions running back Davd Montgomery crashing through the line of scrimmage. The G80 held firm, the eight-speed transmission holding a higher gear as I rocketed out of the last turn and onto a brief straight stretch. BRRRAAAAAGH! The engine's growl opened into a full-throated roar.

Bring on Cadillac, Porsche, Acura, BMW and other luxury hypercar brands!

A decade ago, the 2015 G80 was a pretender. Affordably priced, it bore an Audi-like grille, Acura-like V-6 engine and BMW-like infotainment system controlled by a rotary dial. The 2025 model is no pretender; Genesis has come into its own.

They did it the old-fashioned way – poaching talent from the competition.

Belgian designer Luc Donckervolke came over from Lamborghini and gave Genesis its own design language. It's hard to miss. Rather than dual racing stripes over the hood like a Dodge Viper or Ford Mustang, Donckervolke wrapped the cars with a distinctive dual-lighting signature. At auto shows, the Genesis team likes to pose next to their creations with two fingers held out horizontally – scissor-style – to echo the design theme.

The G80 got a lotta looks on my trip up north.

As I cruised down Bridge Street in Charlevoix, I watched the heads of the high school football players swivel as the Genesis cruised past. In a parking lot, a couple circled the car. It's not just the swept sportback and dual headlights/taillights that get noticed – the bold shield grille gives the fascia presence.

And lots of air to feed the beast within.

Genesis hired BMW M Division chief Albert Biermann to tune its cars for performance. My Sport Prestige tester's twin-turbo V-6 is a step up from the base model's 300-horsepower turbo-4. Thus equipped, it is aimed squarely at all-wheel-drive performance sedans like the Audi S6, BMW 540i and Cadillac CT5-V.

Photos by Henry Payne / The Detroit News / TNS

The 2025 Genesis G80 Sport Prestige loads on the luxury with a powerful twin-turbo V-6 and red lather interior to compete against German automakers in the $80k space. It features two rotary dials to control the transmission and the infotainment screen.

Those brands have entered top-drawer motorsports, too (Genesis will be going head-to-head in the Hypercar class with Bimmer and Caddy). With the G80 Sport Prestige, Genesis is commanding a top-drawer price as well.

The Audi S6 leads this fleet of comparably equipped all-wheel-drive performance sedans with an eye-watering sticker price of $85K, but the Genesis is not far behind at $78,250. That's a healthy 10 grand north of the 540i M-Sport and CT5 V-Series.

The latter is one of my favorite performance sedans and raises the bar for 2025 with a 36-inch dash screen run by state-of-the-art Google Built-in like its Lyriq EV sibling. And you thought big screens were just for EVs?

G80, too, takes design cues from the Hyundai group EVs. A striking 28-inch hoodless display stretches across the dash – complemented by a head-up display. Cadillac was a HUD pioneer, and the Genesis follows with useful information like Android Auto directions, speed limit and adaptive cruise control mph so I didn't have to take my eyes off the road.

The Genesis has also taken a cue from General Motors' excellent steering wheel ergonomics. Raised toggle buttons made it easy for me to adjust ACC and volume controls without glancing down. The Genesis's console ergonomics were another story.

Following in the footsteps of BMW, G80 offers dual controls for the infotainment display: touchscreen as well as a fat rotary remote dial. Unfortunately, the rotary dial is the same size as the rotary automatic gear shifter on the console – and they are directly in line with one another.

Turn the rotary dial left to turn down the volume, and ...

Ooops! I shifted the car into NEUTRAL!

Turn the rotary dial to DRIVE, and ...

Oops! I turned up the volume!

I learned to be deliberate in choosing the two functions, but – though it would throw off the aesthetic appeal of twin rotary dials – drivers would be better served by a steering stalk or T-shifter to avoid confusion.

Biermann's team has clearly been working with the G80 in the gym. I enjoyed taking the big dog off the leash on the M-32 twisties. But competition at this level is ferocious, and the Cadillac not only employs impressive electronic suspension dynamics – but offers toys like the steering-wheel-based V-button, which allows drivers to instantly summon their favorite performance settings.

Alas, the M-32 rollercoaster is all too brief, and I spent most of my journey north on I-75. The G80 aims to make the long stretches drama-free with a good adaptive cruise system that not only deploys a bubble of lane centering/distance-keeping safety systems – but also didn't nanny me every 15 seconds with a warning to pay attention.

The system combines a camera – Cadillac Super Cruise-style – to monitor your attention while also sensing steering input. The G80 would even switch lanes automatically for me at the tug of the turn-signal stalk.

But here, too, it trails the '25 Cadillac and its optional Super Cruise system – one of the industry leaders in autonomous systems. Hands-free, automatic lane changes, lane centering. The works.

The new kid on the block dresses to kill and my G80 sported a striking red interior. My friend Suzie slipped inside. "Ooooh, I could get used to this," she smiled. "I love that red leather smell."

Genesis is turning heads and it intends to keep it that way. At the 2024 New York Auto Show, it set its sights on the Audi RS, BMW M5 and Caddy CT5-V Blackwing super-sedan models when it rolled out a bright-orange G80 Magma extracting over 500 horsepower from the familiar twin-turbo V-6 powerhouse. A variant of that engine is likely to power the IMSA Hypercar.

As the name "Genesis" implies, the luxury brand is just getting started.

Next week: 2025 Volvo EX30

Henry Payne is auto critic for The Detroit News.

2025 Genesis G80

★★★

Vehicle type: All-wheel drive, five-passenger luxury sedan

Price: $58,350, including $1,250 destination charge ($79,030 Sport Prestige as tested)

Powerplant: 2.5-liter, turbocharged, inline 4-cylinder; 3.5-liter, twin-turbocharged V-6

Power: 300 horsepower, 311 pound-feet of torque (I-4); 375 horsepower, 391 pound-feet of torque (V-6)

Transmission: Eight-speed automatic

Performance: 0-60 mph, 5.2 seconds (Motor Trend); Top speed, 140-155 mph

Weight: 4,587 pounds

Fuel economy: EPA 16 mpg city/24 highway/19 combined; 367-mile range

Report card

Highs: Striking design; upscale interior

Lows: Easy to confuse shift dial with volume dial; gets pricey

2025 BMW X6M Competition shouldn't work, but it does

By LARRY PRINTZ
Tribune News Service (TNS)

There was a time when a BMW coupe meant grace, balance, rear-wheel drive and sublime steering feel. The 2025 BMW X6 M Competition is anything BUT that. It's a mind-ripping, retina-peeling, money-to-burn, Bavarian Rottweiler that's unapologetically loud, brutally fast – and shaped like a sneaker. Nonetheless, it's not so much driven as unleashed, a joyful act of middle-finger defiance to conformity, moderation and utilitarianism.

And it's a true curiosity, if only because there's so much about the 2025 BMW X6 M Competition that shouldn't work, but does.

It's an SUV with a sloped backlight meant to evoke sportiness. Yet its 8.3 inches of ground clearance sits high enough to frighten Jeeps, while its slanting silhouette sacrifices cargo space, an SUV's raison d'être, to the gods of roofline aesthetics. It's an SUV that weighs 5,454 pounds but moves like a bouncer wearing Ferragamo loafers. Then there's BMW's 4.4-liter twin-turbocharged V-8. It's mated to a 48-volt mild hybrid system that's not there for efficiency, as the EPA rates this rig at 15 mpg in combined city/highway driving. Instead, the hybrid system aids acceleration, with the powertrain offering up 617 horsepower and 553 pound-feet of torque to your right foot.

As a result, what happens once you press your case on the throttle is not unexpected. BMW says that reaching 60 mph takes but 3.7 seconds, but that's only if the laws of physics don't call their lawyer. This is a truck with a clear disdain for inertia usually reserved for space shuttles and large, angry bosses. The eight-speed automatic shifts without drama or hesitation, standing aside as speed is discharged and V-8 fury thunders from quad tailpipes the size of Civil War cannons. Its rear-biased all-wheel drive system has an electronic differential that's dexterous enough to make you forget you're piloting 5,454 pounds of Bavarian missile with the front profile of a garden shed. It stays flat in corners, brakes fiercely, and responds like a much smaller vehicle. And its adaptive dampers ensure a civilized ride despite the 21-inch front and 22-inch rear wheels. The only downside? Rearward visibility is a joke. Thank goodness for its multiple exterior cameras.

Yet the 2025 BMW X6 M Competition clearly defies physics and common sense. How is this possible? Again, it shouldn't work, but it does.

And the interior? It's lavish, of course, with thick, sumptuous leather covering seats that grip you like a jealous lover. A massive 27.2-inch curved display bathes you in a technological fever dream, while ambient lighting, carbon fiber, heated and cooled cupholders and massaging seats ensure your comfort. And of course, there's Apple CarPlay, Android Auto, and an optional, concert-hall-worthy 20-speaker Bowers & Wilkins audio system. A Harman Kardon sound system comes standard.

The logical side of your brain may be chiming in at this point that a vehicle like the 2025 BMW X6M Competition is utterly unnecessary. It's something that no one needs. And that's true. Yet no one needs a vintage Patek Philippe or a bottle of 1946 Château Latour. But this is not about necessity; it's about passion, longing and desire.

The 2025 BMW X6 M Competition is a moving mass of torque-fueled testosterone that will leave you grinning, something not always guaranteed in a vehicle with a six-figure price tag. Now, you may logically ask, who buys one? I can only guess. Real estate moguls? Crypto kings? Thirty-eight-year-old divorcees?

Regardless, the BMW X6 M remains an utter mystery. It's a monument to money and might; at once a marvel of menace and muscle – and it's utterly captivating.

Larry Printz is an automotive journalist based in South Florida.

Uwe Fischer / BMW / TNS

2025 BMW X6M Competition

Base price: $129,700

Engine: Twin-turbocharged 4.4-liter V8 mild-hybrid

Horsepower/Torque: 617/553 pound-feet

EPA rating (combined city/highway): 15 mpg

Fuel required: Premium

Length/Width/Height: 195/80/67 inches

Ground clearance: 8.4 inches

Payload: 1,025 pounds

Cargo capacity: 27-60 cubic feet

Towing capacity: 7,200 pounds

TECHNOLOGY

2025's best dehumidifiers

By CNET.COM (TNS)

Many things contribute to your overall health and well-being, and if you want to be at your best, then the air you breathe plays a large part in that. Poor air quality can affect your body's heart and respiratory system and cause irritation and discomfort. No one likes those things, so it's important to ensure you breathe the best air, especially inside your home.

If you experience high humidity levels, which can increase during the spring and summer months, then it can lead to issues like mold growth, which is not great for your health and also leads to property damage. This is when a dehumidifier comes to the rescue, as they absorb moisture and improve the air quality in the home, especially during more humid months.

Where areas lack proper air circulation, high humidity and potential problems are a risk. That's why using a dehumidifier's capacity to handle damp indoor spaces such as bathrooms, laundry rooms and basements is a smart move.

Our CNET experts have identified the top dehumidifiers available in 2025 to help reduce humidity levels in your home, and three of these models are detailed here.

The following CNET staff contributed to this story: Editor Corin Cesaric. contributor Pamela Vachon and Copy Editor Jim Hoffman. For more reviews of personal technology products, please visit www.cnet.com.

Frigidaire FGAC5044W1

Best overall dehumidifier

CNET TAKE: Since dehumidifiers rely on refrigeration technology to pull humidity out of the air in your home, it should be no surprise that a company known for refrigerators tops our list.

This 50-pint, large-capacity model offers a helpful smart capability that allows you to connect the machine to Wi-Fi and monitor the fullness of the collection tank remotely. Plus, it will turn off on its own when it's full so there's no need to worry about coming home to a mess, and it offers a continuous draining option, too.

Another benefit of this machine is the washable filter, so you don't need to consistently replace it. Depending on your size, budget and functionality needs, Frigidaire is always a steady choice.

Most high-functioning dehumidifiers aren't winning any points for style, but this Frigidaire model has a clean, unobtrusive look. Reviewers online frequently noted a quick, drastic improvement of the humidity levels in the rooms where this was placed.

Frigidaire / TNS

hOmeLabs HME020031N

Best dehumidifier for basements

CNET TAKE: This hOmeLabs dehumidifier purports to be able to manage the largest square footage among various models, perfect for managing an open-plan, damp basement or other large space with excess moisture. According to Energy Star, it's also one of the most energy-efficient options for dehumidifiers, which can save you money. Among its many benefits, this dehumidifier can also remove up to 22 pints of moisture from the air each day, ensuring a humidity-free home. It also features wheels and a handle for ease of moving, and it has a timer.

Customers on Amazon frequently remarked that the dehumidifier was exceptionally quiet and was easy to assemble and use.

hOmeLabs / TNS

Midea MAD22C1AWS

Best dehumidifier under $200

CNET TAKE: If you live with humid summers, an easy way to cut down on your monthly energy bill is to run a dehumidifier and fan in your bedroom rather than rely on central air conditioning to cool every unoccupied room in your house overnight. For bedroom needs, you probably require less power and reach, but the noise level of the unit becomes a bigger concern.

This Midea model has one of the lowest decibels available, with user reviews reporting it was no louder than an average fan and emits none of the vibrating or shuddering noises that some models can make. Midea also had a strong showing among various review sites overall, with several models being designated best compact, best budget or quietest dehumidifier.

In addition to the quietness of the machine, it has Wi-Fi and voice control capabilities, two drainage options and an automatic restart function that goes into effect if your power goes out.

It can dehumidify up to 22 pints per day, which is equivalent to more than 2.5 gallons.

Midea Dehumidifier / TNS

GADGETS

These earbuds are a winner

By GREGG ELLMAN
Tribune News Service (TNS)

It's a safe bet that when I open a product from Sennheiser, the sound quality is top-notch. So it shouldn't come as a surprise when I say their new Accentum Open true wireless earbuds are a winner for a variety of reasons.

First and foremost is the sound, an area where Sennheiser has come to be known for, since its inception in 1945. I'll do the math for you: 80 years. Each of Accentum Open's true wireless earbuds has an 11mm dynamic driver, which pumps clear, crisp sound into your ears with Sennheiser's renowned sound tuning.

Sound is most important, but if the earbuds aren't comfortable, the sound doesn't matter. Accentum Open are designed with a universal fit, featuring an open nature that gives users the comfort they need. This prevents ear fatigue, allowing for all-day use. The weight is a significant contributor to ergonomic comfort, with each stem-styled earbud weighing 4.4 grams or 0.155 ounces.

Inside is Bluetooth 5.3, which also supports multipoint connectivity, allowing them to be connected to up to eight devices and enabling seamless switching between laptops, smartphones or tablets. With the built-in dual-beam-forming microphones, the quality of hands-free calls will be crystal clear, with minimal background noise.

You'll get about 6.5 hours of playback before a charge is needed in the portable charging case. Fast charging will yield 1.5 hours of use from a 10-minute charge. And you can go a total of 28 hours before the case itself needs a USB-C charge.

The app free Accentum Open true wireless earbuds are poolside safe with an IPX4 splash resistance rating, which also makes them safe for workouts. They are built with my favorite feature, smart pause. Now, when an earbud is removed, the music pauses, and it resumes playing when the earbud is put back in your ear.

Tone prompts alert you to features such as power on/off, pairing, low battery, etc. There is no need to turn them on; they automatically activate when removed from the charging case. To turn them off, return them to the case. Adjusting the volume, taking calls, and selecting music are done with responsive touch controls.

https://www.sennheiser-hearing.com; $129.95, available in black or cream

The Sennheiser Accentum Open has an 11mm dynamic driver.
Sennheiser / CNET / TNS

ABOVE: The Mixx Assistive Audio Noise-Reducing Earplugs have a noise reduction rating of 10 decibels for travel, 15 decibels for music, and 20 decibels for study environments.

RIGHT: The Mixx Assistive Audio Sleep Earplugs are made with hypoallergenic, medical-grade silicone.
Mixx Ltd. / CNET / TNS

While the Accentum Open TW earbuds deliver great sound to your ears, the Mixx Assistive Audio noise-reducing earplugs do the opposite, blocking sounds for a quieter environment, whether for better sleep or to enjoy peace and quiet.

The Sleep model ($14.99) is designed to help you get a restful night's sleep, with less snoring noise and more snoozing, as stated on the packaging. With insomnia a problem for many of us, we look for anything to help us achieve a good night's sleep.

With the Assistive Audio Sleep earplugs, even side sleepers will like the way they block noise with their low-profile design. They are made with hypoallergenic, medical-grade silicone for a comfortable fit that does not cause skin irritation.

There's no charging, power or pairing. Just find the right fit, with three included sizes to choose from: small, medium and large. Once you have the correct size, the tip will conform to your ear for a natural fit with its spring-loaded design.

The Assistive Audio Adaptive ($24.99) adjustable passive noise reduction earplugs are designed to protect your hearing in various environments. They have a noise reduction rating of 10 decibels for travel, 15 decibels for music, and 20 decibels for study environments.

They are also made with Hypoallergenic medical-grade silicone. Once you have it in your ear, twist the ear plug for use in different settings. The Adaptive earplugs have a US ANSI S3.19-1974 hearing protection standard certification.

Both models come with a carrying case and are machine washable. Assistive Audio is the medical devices division of Mixx Ltd.

https://www.mixx-audio.com

Contact Gregg Ellman at greggellman@mac.com. Follow him on Twitter @greggellman.

Sometimes, problems aren't your fault

By JIM ROSSMAN
Tribune News Service (TNS)

Most weeks, just when I'm wondering what I'll write about, a topic will find me.

I got a call yesterday from my brother. It was midday, and we were both at work.

Our phone calls are usually later at night, so I knew something was up.

He and his wife were both having email problems and I could tell from his voice that it was stressful. My brother is tech savvy, and he only calls me when he's really stuck.

He and his wife use Microsoft's Hotmail and both were unable to sign into their accounts.

He was trying to reset the password to his Hotmail account and Microsoft wanted to send a recovery code to his recovery contact, which was his wife's email. Likewise, his wife was locked out and my brother's email was her recovery contact.

They were stuck.

Microsoft offered to send a recovery code to his phone number on file, but when he tried that option, he simply received a message that the phone option was not available and to try again later.

We talked about the options, but he needed to get back to work, so I gave him some things to try at home.

A bit later that same day, I got a text from a friend who was having trouble getting Alexa to play his music via voice commands through Spotify. Alexa was telling him to reauthorize Spotify in the Alexa app, but he wasn't sure how to do that.

I had helped this friend set up a new Wi-Fi router the day before and we moved all his Alexa devices to the new router and I was afraid I'd messed something up, even though it was all working when I left.

As I was texting with my friend, I walked into my house and asked Alexa to turn on the living room lights, which usually works flawlessly. She said she couldn't find the Wyze lights and I needed to re-authorize the Wyze skill in the Alexa app.

I know how to do that, so I went to the Alexa app, opened the Skills section and searched for Wyze. When I clicked on the Wyze skill, I got an error message that the page could not be found.

Then something in my brain clicked and I looked for the Spotify skill and it also led me to an error page.

I began to wonder if Amazon was having an Alexa issue (it was).

I also started to wonder if Microsoft was having an email issue (also, yes).

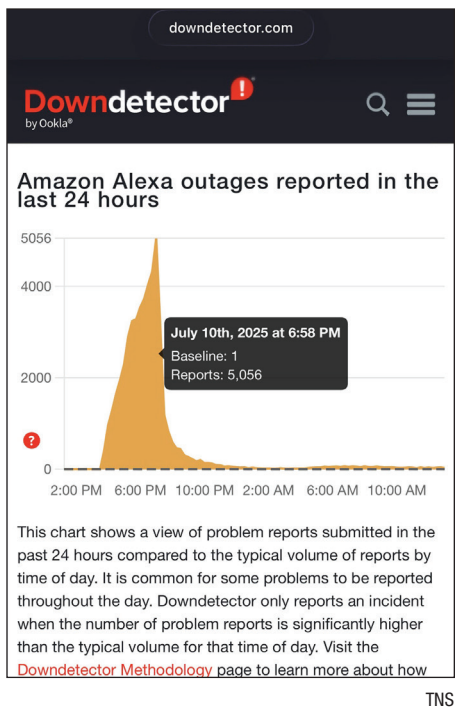
My go-to page for checking if a website or service is having trouble is called Down Detector. If you go to downdetector.com and enter the name of the website or service, you'll know pretty quickly if there is any type of problem.

Another place to check is on Reddit.com on the subreddit (specific page) for the particular site or service. I looked at the r/Alexa subreddit and there were several threads already posted by people having issues with Alexa skills.

Turns out my brother and my friend were both having issues that were beyond their control. Both were back up and running later that day.

So, today's lesson is don't just assume every computer issue is your fault. Take a minute to check online and see if the problem is on the other end.

Jim Rossman is a tech columnist for Tribune News Service. He may be reached at jrossman techadviser@gmail.com.


downdetector.com
Downdetector
by Ookla
Amazon Alexa outages reported in the last 24 hours
5056
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July 10th, 2025 at 6:58 PM
Baseline: 1
Reports: 5,056
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This chart shows a view of problem reports submitted in the past 24 hours compared to the typical volume of reports by time of day. It is common for some problems to be reported throughout the day. Downdetector only reports an incident when the number of problem reports is significantly higher than the typical volume for that time of day. Visit the Downdetector Methodology page to learn more about how

TNS

Down Detector website shows a chart of the spike in issues reported with Alexa.

So, today's lesson is don't just assume every computer issue is your fault. Take a minute to check online and see if the problem is on the other end.

HOME&GARDEN

Provided photo / TNS

A statement green chair is accented with a toss pillow with green accents.

DESIGN RECIPES

Green with envy

By CATHY HOBBS
Tribune News Service (TNS)

Green is a color that is both warm and cozy, a citrus color with lots of yellow undertones that can be used in several different ways. Green is a versatile accent color that doesn't offend and is a luxurious accent color when used in purposeful ways.

When looking to infuse green into your décor, here are some top tips.

Do

■ Do pair green with natural elements such as wood, rattan and greenery.

■ Do pair green with contrast colors such as black, cream and chocolate brown.

■ Do incorporate greenery and green elements such as trees and foliage into your interior space.

■ Do layer various shades of green, such as tints, tones and shades.

■ Do use green with bold finishes such as black and brass.

Don't

■ Don't use dark shades of green in small areas as it may make a space feel too small or overwhelming.

■ Don't overlook incorporating green with key accessories such as artwork and toss pillows.

■ Don't overlook light shades of green such as pastel, which can be soft and welcoming if looking for a clean, fresh look.

■ Don't ignore using green as a statement color such as key furniture elements to help anchor a space.

■ Don't blend too many shades of green in a small space. If working in a small room, look to use a maximum of three shades.

Cathy Hobbs is a nationally recognized real estate stager and celebrity interior designer based in New York City. Cathy is the owner of the NYC + Hudson Valley-based interior design, home staging firm Cathy Hobbs Design Recipes and the author of the book "Home Design Recipes." www.cathyhobbs.com.

Scott Gabriel Morris / Provided photo / TNS

Accent pillows and accessories help to add green elements in this living space.

What can I do about radon?

Let's face it, "radioactive gas" isn't exactly a cheerful topic for dinner conversation. But when radon shows up on a home inspection report, it can quickly become top of mind. Radon needs to be taken seriously, but the good news is that it's manageable. Staying on top of it could mean protecting both your family's health and your home's future value.

Angie Hicks
Ask Angi

Dreamstime / TNS

Because radon is odorless and tasteless and can appear in any home, only a laboratory radon test can identify it.

Radon is a naturally occurring, odorless and tasteless radioactive gas. It comes from the breakdown of uranium in soil, and it can seep into homes through the ground. This isn't about poor maintenance or bad construction – any house can have a radon problem. That includes new builds, older homes, drafty places, airtight ones and homes with or without basements.

The Environmental Protection Agency lists radon as the second-leading cause of lung cancer in the United States, trailing only smoking. It's linked to roughly 21,000 deaths each year. For this reason, the EPA recommends that all homes be tested after occupancy and every two years thereafter, even if they have a mitigation system.

So how do you know if your home has radon? That's the tricky part. Since radon is invisible and odorless, the only way to detect it is through testing. Radon levels vary dramatically from one home to the next, even if they're right next door.

You can pick up a DIY radon test kit for $15 to $40. It sits in your home for several days, then you send it off to a lab. Just be sure to follow the instructions carefully for accurate results. For the most reliable information, professional radon testing is your best bet. It typically costs between $150 and $300 and is often bundled into a home inspection.

Federal guidelines say any home with radon levels of 4 picocuries per liter (pCi/L) or higher should have a mitigation system installed. Many states require it as part of a real estate transaction. The EPA also recommends considering action at levels above 2 pCi/L, especially if you spend a lot of time in lower levels of the home.

What can I do about it?

Here's where things get reassuring: While you can't stop radon from existing in soil, you can keep it from building up in your home.

Radon mitigation systems typically run between $800 and $1,300, though larger or more complex homes may cost more. The most common radon mitigation system involves drilling into the slab or crawl space to create a suction point. A fan then vents the gas outside through a dedicated pipe.

Another option is passive depressurization, which doesn't use a fan. It simply allows rising air pressure in the home to carry radon gas out through venting. It's quieter and uses no electricity, but it's not as effective in areas with high radon levels.

Some home builders offer radon-resistant features, such as sealing foundation cracks and pre-installed vent piping. However, these are usually part of new construction and don't always eliminate the need for mitigation. Your pro can give you advice on the best system for your needs.

When hiring a radon contractor, be aware that no national agency licenses radon contractors, so check your state's certification requirements and ask for references or proof of training. A qualified pro should also test your home after installation to confirm the system is working properly. You can also run a follow-up test yourself to double-check.

Radon might not be top of mind, but a simple test and a straightforward fix can go a long way toward protecting your family's health. If you haven't tested your home in a while – or ever – now's the time. It's one of those smart, proactive steps that pays off in peace of mind.

Tweet your home care questions with #AskingAngi and we'll try to answer them in a future column.